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ABSTRACT

This book reports on the outcomes of an international policy-research project concerned with how power is used in education to construct and discharge obligations among stakeholders. The collection of articles suggests how such processes might better serve educational ends. The research examines how the politics of education at the site and systemic levels have been contributing to the reconstruction of accountability policies in an international policy context, a context characterized by conceptual disarray, multi-reform strategies, blunt administrative instruments, and plurally political cultures. The text is divided into two parts. Part 1 reports on research conducted in North American settings, focusing on low-wealth school districts, on how to enhance accountability, on integrated governance, on authentic education accountability policies, and on patterns of social control in assessment practices. Part 2 provides research reports from England and Wales, and Australia, a comparative study of two Australian and Canadian systems, and then two philosophical chapters that examine some international dilemmas. (RJM)

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The Politics of *Accountability*

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The Politics of *Accountability*

Educative and International Perspectives

Editor
Reynold J. S. Macpherson

The 1997 Yearbook of the Politics of Education Association

Published simultaneously as
The 1997 Yearbook of the Politics of Education Association
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Introduction to the Politics of Accountability

Challenges in Retrospect

REYNOLD J. S. MACPHERSON,
JAMES G. CIBULKA, DAVID H. MONK,
and KENNETH K. WONG

The project began with two primary international audiences being identified: policy communities in schools, educational networks, and systems, and those engaged in policy studies and research. We expected that they would each value case and policy studies as well as theoretical reflections. The chapters that follow reveal the politics and purposes of accountability in a context of pluralism; differentiated powers and contested structures; strategic options and priorities concerning accountability processes and criteria; the collection and wise (and not so wise) use of performance and service data; and accountability politics intended to help reconstruct norms, beliefs, and educational management, and governance practices. They also indicate the links between the politics of accountability and the politics of legitimation, access and equity, productivity, choice, excellence, resources, information, and structure. They demonstrate that the politics of accountability play out their role in classrooms, school communities, districts, regions, states, and nations, and that group, institutional, systemic, and comparative perspectives need to be considered if educative outcomes are an end of accountability.

Part I of this collection reports research conducted in North American settings. Part II provides research reports from England and Wales, Australia, a comparative study of two Australian and Canadian systems, and then two philosophical chapters that examine what turn out to be international dilemmas. There is a sequence to the chapters in each part that is now explained. In essence, they address a set of current challenges.

PART I: NORTH AMERICAN POLITICS OF ACCOUNTABILITY

District Productivity Politics

The first chapter (Chapter 2) in Part I begins on ground that is probably familiar to administrators worldwide: the challenge of designing an indicator system that might improve the organisation of a school district. David H. Monk, Emil J. Haller, and Janie L. Nusser recognise that efforts to study and promote school district organisational reform through the application of accountability measures must contend with at least two problems. First, although progress has been made across the United States in developing performance-based measures of school district quality, these measures continued to be less than ideal. Second, the long-standing belief that efficiencies will accrue from reforms of school district organisational structure has been challenged by the recognition that impediments constrain anticipated gains in efficiency. New ways to approach these problems are needed for the successful implementation of outcome-driven accountability systems.

Monk et al. report on one such effort by the New York State Board of Regents. The Regents' Organizational Change Study employed five indicators designed to identify districts with potential impediments to organisational productivity and 68 indicators constructed to characterise the internal operation as well as the outcomes of the schooling systems being studied. A blend of methodologies was used. First were elements of a production function approach using a statistical analysis of indicator data. Second was a qualitative methodology culminating in intensive case studies where the goal was to understand what lay behind the indicator numbers, and where the emphasis was on discerning the unique features of individual sites that may have bearing on the success of the organisation at realising educational results. Their chapter is drawn from one such case study. Third was a collaborative approach across levels of school governance that allowed local decision makers to participate in the political process through collaborative construction of their districts' assessments, as well as through providing information leading to improvements in the indicators.

The component of the research that Monk et al. report here is about a structural condition believed to create productivity difficulties for school districts: a high property tax rate coupled with a low level of wealth. Because New York State uses local property taxes as a major source of revenue for its schools, the Regents wanted to know more about how impoverished communities meet their responsibility to educate resident students. In the case presented, why were relatively poor people choosing to tax themselves at unusually high rates? The answers were found in the politics of accountability. Local administrators and board members had developed strategies for build-

ing tolerance for high tax rates and containing costs. They were sustaining what is described as an "uneasy peace."

Integrated Governance Politics

Chapter 3, by Kenneth K. Wong and Dorothea Anagnostopoulos, examines another form of "uneasy peace" created in two low-performing Chicago high schools when district officials took the view that "integrated governance" would help transform the quality of teaching. The Chicago School Reform Amendatory Act (Illinois State Assembly, 1995) that "integrated" school governance actually gave the mayor direct authority over the public schools. This marginalised many policy actors once influential in decision making and gave district administrators considerable financial and management power. The chief executive officer was able, for example, to place "poorly performing" schools in remediation, probation, and intervention programs.

The politics of accountability intensified and were not always educational in effect. The new district administrators strengthened their power base. They built up public confidence by improving school buildings and used the local media to expose waste and to publicise responsiveness. Business support grew when they reduced and privatised parts of the district's central office. One hundred and nine (20%) elementary and high schools were "placed on probation" and told to boost student achievement or face "reconstitution." The transformation of teaching, however, proved far less amenable to such cavalier politics. Wong and Anagnostopoulos researched how the district's probation policy actually affected curricular and instructional practices in two low-performing Chicago high schools. Their review of policy implementation processes reveals how "street-level bureaucrats" strongly mediated the effects on classroom teaching.

Equity Politics

Rick Ginsberg and Barnett Berry go further in their Chapter 4 to suggest that most accountability models are unlikely to change local practices. They made case studies of the barriers to effective accountability in a low-achieving school district. They reiterated findings already in the literature to show that externally driven demands for greater accountability have yet to make any real impact, that internal accountability methods tend to rely on nonexistent capacities, and that district accountability systems often fail to provide a "critical mass" of conditions. The challenge, they argue, technically outstrips the limits of educational policy making.

Their case appears to have substance. Since *A Nation at Risk* was published (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), many states have used standardised test scores as the indicator of school quality, built incentive regimes involving payments for results, and have threatened state takeovers

of poorly performing schools. Such approaches have consistently simplified student learning and ignored learning conditions and social context. Similarly, boosting curriculum alignment and staff development has had little effect in many poorly performing schools and districts. And despite the introduction of multiple-indicator systems, test scores continued to be the key indicator of learning.

Ginsberg and Berry conducted case studies in districts with very different socioeconomic and performance profiles. They interviewed selected policymakers, educational practitioners, and community representatives. Their institutional and political analysis examined the varying local circumstances, including the extent to which the politics of race, poverty, and traditionalistic political cultures affected accountability norms. They concluded that the concept of responsibility had to be substantially developed to create a more comprehensive and systemwide accountability system, which would, in turn, alter how accountability is being conceptualised and applied. They also found that communities may need to collectively examine how their underlying beliefs and behaviours affect the educational system and then reframe their feelings to begin addressing the key issues. Learning-disabled adults, they argue, will need to recognise and accept their disability, and then take action. The focus should be on the dysfunctional aspects of culture.

Federal-State Program Politics

In Chapter 5, Colorado's experience of accounting for a major school-to-career program is the subject of case study. Colorado was one of 19 states funded in 1996 by the federal government to set up a school-to-career system intended to provide educational and work-related curricula and vocational guidance to students across all ability ranges. Of all the major industrial nations, the United States has been one of the last to provide such educational infrastructure. Most states will probably receive similar funding by 1998. "School-to-work" is really a national effort to create a system out of a patchwork of similar programs across the United States.

Arnold Danzig, R. Brian Cobb, Timothy Gray Davies, Corinne Mantle-Bromley, and Ann B. Miser report how the politics of accountability have deeply affected the implementation, representation, and evaluation of Colorado's $24 million initiative. They locate the case in its historical and political context and explain how recent federal legislation has had an impact. The structure of the program is based on delivery partnerships. The intention is to provide places for all students in the state who seek to participate in school-to-career activities. This also means many new opportunities and challenges for educators and business people, and unique challenges concerning accountability.

In essence, Colorado developed an accountability system that accommodated its decentralised system of local partnerships and regional centres. Re-

sponsibility for accountability was shared between the state management team that provided policy and advisory services, a state evaluator who prepared quarterly reports and national surveys, and a university evaluation team that was contracted to facilitate local evaluation. This access led to research findings about the Colorado school-to-career program and to the quality of its accountability.

Among other findings, Danzig et al. show that if accountability is to help build capacity, the long-term effects of school-to-work policies must be examined more carefully. They predict that gains will build slowly and incrementally; that political pressures for immediate success will not abate; but that commitment to improving local partnerships through evaluation, reflection, and informed action will help construct more appropriate and authentic forms of accountability.

Authentic Politics

This crucial topic of authenticity in accountability was further investigated by James G. Cibulka and Roberta L. Derlin when they compared local responses to state-initiated accountability policies in Colorado and Maryland. They examined the accountability systems as sets of standards and processes designed to assure that organisational goals are achieved. They noted that in more recent years, U.S. state education agencies had moved accountability from compliance with rules and prudent management of inputs to responsibility for maximising student outcomes.

The conceptual building blocks for these newer accountability policies differed by state but variously included content and performance standards for students, assessment systems tied to standards, performance-based licensure for staff, public reporting systems such as a state "report card," financial rewards to schools for exemplary or improved performance, state intervention in the case of poorly performing schools, and so on.

The key problem addressed in Cibulka and Derlin's Chapter 6 is the impact these macro-level accountability policies have at the local level. They defined "authentic accountability policies" as those that win acceptance locally and that, by virtue of their legitimacy, motivate local officials to try to improve student achievement so that a wide range of students perform well on rigorous assessments tied to content and performance standards.

Cibulka and Derlin used a research framework based on the "new institutionalism" (particularly its political science applications) to analyse local responses to accountability policies. New institutionalism, although yet to be widely applied in the study of policy, appears to offer a fruitful point of departure for understanding the broad array of factors that come into play once policies are adopted.

They anticipated variability in local response to the policies. In Maryland, for example, some of the initial passive resistance from affluent districts had dissipated, partly because of state implementation strategies. The reaction to state accountability policies from poorly performing schools targeted by the state, however, presented a more complex picture. Each state's ability to balance capacity-building strategies and rewards alongside accountability policies (which tended to be perceived as punitive sanctions) appeared to be a critical ingredient. The analysis presented examines the evolution of these policies and the complex institutional and political factors that may tip the balance of accountability policies too far in one direction or the other. In other words, the analysis examines the range of factors that are likely to determine whether authentic accountability policies can prevail.

Politics as Social Control

Chapter 7, which concludes Part I of this book, is a review of accountability frameworks in Canadian education by Hanne B. Mawhinney. She shows that many educational reform agendas in a number of industrialised nations have been driven by a perceived crisis in accountability. This has typically meant a new focus on assessment—as one of the means by which educational systems ensure that schools are accountable to society for the investment made in them. The history of assessment has always been closely related to the formalisation of public education. It is shown by Mawhinney that in the past 20 years or so, the level of assessment-focused educational policy activity had broadened, intensified, and led to initiatives and fresh assessment strategies.

Her chapter was, therefore, intended to highlight the systematic differences in patterns and modes of social control evident in assessment practices across Canada. She collected evidence of the reconciliation of conflicting demands for assessment reform in Canada's 10 provinces and two territories. She reviewed the ways in which pressing demands for increased accountability are being reconciled with pleas for more and better assessment systems; systems that provide rich data about specific student learning. She conducted telephone interview surveys of 12 officials responsible for assessment policies in the different jurisdictions and telephone surveyed seven school district personnel responsible for assessment.

Mawhinney also examined the converse cases where such research is not being given such emphasis. Few studies, for example, have been attending to the pressures and patterns of policy response common across different institutional contexts that inform assessment initiatives and strategies. She came to the view that the social role of assessment is as extensive as it ever has been, and that the driving philosophy is one of social control.

PART II: INTERNATIONAL POLITICS OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Consumerist Politics

The first chapter (Chapter 8) in Part II is also the first of two concerned with the politics of accountability in England and Wales. Janet Ouston, Brian Fidler, and Peter Earley begin by showing that the changes in patterns of accountability in education in England and Wales during the past 10 years have to be seen in the wider context of changes throughout the public sector. In most public services, quasi-markets were set up to enforce a more responsive and customer-focused approach from the new quasi-autonomous ex-public sector organisations. Regulatory bodies were established to set standards of performance and to audit them. Performance indicators were introduced and comparisons were published to inform the users of the service and to put pressure on underperformers to improve. However, publishing the comparisons reportedly created tensions between ensuring accountability and encouraging improved performance.

Public education followed a similar pattern. At first sight, it might seem that power in education has been transferred from local education authorities to parents. In practice, however, research soon indicated that a hierarchy of schools had been established, with some schools selecting parents rather than parents selecting schools. At the same time, control of the curriculum has passed from local authorities and schools to central government. It should be noted that parents in the state sector have no choice over the curriculum their children experience. As Ouston et al. note, this tension—between the regulated market and central control—is found throughout the education system.

Ouston et al. have focused their research on schools' responses to the new inspection processes and their perceived contribution to the developmental process. Schools differ considerably in their perceptions, but most of them have reported that the inspection is a reasonably valid statement of the performance of their schools. Some schools have used the reports as part of their own development, whereas others have found this more problematic. Parents also take very different views of the new inspection process, and not all are entirely enthusiastic.

There are, therefore, many interesting questions about recent changes in accountability and power in English education that Ouston et al. pursue in their chapter. Have the recent changes actually led to more information for, and accountability to, parents? Have school inspection and publishing comparative performance indicators improved school performance? Has the setting of particular performance indicators changed educational priorities? Do parents really have more power over their children's education through choice of schools than they had previously?

Communitarian Politics

Chapter 9 in Part II also reports research in England and Wales. Hilary A. Radnor, Stephen J. Ball, and Carol Vincent investigated the links between local educational government, accountability, and democracy. They conducted four case studies of local education authorities (LEAs). These case studies were designed to reveal how the LEAs were interpreting and responding to the accountability policy framework put in place by the 1988, 1992, and 1993 Education Acts (Government of Great Britain, 1988, 1991, 1992). Critical policy analysis was used to identify the effects of these policies in the LEAs and the broader social and societal consequences. Qualitative methods were then used to gather data from a range of stakeholders in settings broadly representative of political ideologies, size, location, demography, and history.

One interesting finding is that although forms of accountability have remained unchanged, and some new forms are in evidence, accountability meanings and practices have become confused and incoherent. The identity and responsibilities of "providers" and "clients" tend to be unclear. Some participants do not fit these descriptors, and others are excluded from the forms of exchange they seek. Only some stakeholders can be called to account. Some decisions are visible, others invisible. There is more "ad hocery" than ever. Agencies often have multiple responsibilities as well as ambiguous roles, indefinite boundaries, and contested powers. Radnor et al. use the term *minimagistocracies* with regard to some settings and report that some headteachers have acquired excessive degrees of power.

Bureaucratic Politics

Chapter 10 in this international set is from Australia. Peter Cuttance, Grant Harman, Reynold J. S. Macpherson, Alan Pritchard, and Don Smart combine to report their case studies of the politics of accountability in four state departments of school education as well as a national case from higher education. The case studies are presented to reflect the chronology of events, to indicate the interactive links between the states, and to show how the political processes involved actually worked in each case.

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the phenomenon of systemic politics. The explanation begins in the constitutional quirks of Australian federalism and in the long-standing dominance of education bureaucrats (and ministers) controlling strongly centralised state education departments. It is made clear from the outset that a good part of the explanation also rests in the different types of relations between the federal government and the states that exist in the different education sectors. Another source of explanations relates to state authorities sustaining their resistance to potential federal fi-

nancial and performance accountability and surveillance measures, the Tasmanian case in particular. It is only in the case of the politics of accountability in higher education—the only sector where federal influence is dominant and state policy participation is weak (Smart, 1991)—that the sustained implementation of accountability processes in an education sector has apparently been accomplished in Australia, to date.

Finally, other explanations that Cuttance et al. provide for the "failure" of these four states to implement statewide school accountability processes trace to the role of powerful teachers' unions; changes of government following elections; and, perhaps above all, to deep fears held by traditionally entrenched senior state education policymakers (primarily directors general [DGs] and their corporate executives, but also ministers). These people appear to fear that accountability processes and outcomes might generate unwanted scrutiny, loss of control, and embarrassment to themselves.

Local Democratic Politics

Helen S. Timperley and Viviane M. J. Robinson report their research into staff appraisal as a way of better understanding the micropolitics of accountability in New Zealand schools. The radical democratic reforms to educational administration announced in 1989 had been designed to raise the accountability and responsiveness of schools to stakeholders. Given the widespread concern among politicians about the quality of teaching, new boards of trustees were mandated to govern each school. These boards comprise elected parents, co-opted community members, elected teachers, and the principal, ex officio.

Timperley and Robinson's more recent survey research of school principals and in-depth case studies, however, suggest that the micropolitics in many schools are creating appraisal systems that are leading to professional development rather than professional accountability to the local community or government agencies. It is also clear that the government's more recent attempts to force this issue are likely to be resisted. Nevertheless, new performance management regulations insist that boards have a system that assesses the performance of teachers, and that this system be devised in consultation with their teachers. Schools are also expected to appraise staff members against their key professional responsibilities at least once a year with strong emphasis given to professional development.

Such expectations anticipate a considerable shift from a predominantly professional form of accountability to much more democratic forms. As Timperley and Robinson point out, the tension between the two is neither identified nor addressed in the new policy. Their chapter, therefore, begins by clarifying the concepts involved and examining the tension between these two forms of accountability. They then deploy survey and case study findings

to explain the relatively soft professional accountability that is common in New Zealand schools, and how school micropolitics sustain these practices. They conclude by discussing the type of intervention that would be required to achieve a more educative blend of democratic and professional values in school performance management.

Quality Assurance Politics

Chapter 12, by Canadians Charles F. Webber and David Townsend, provides a report of their comparative research in New South Wales and Alberta. Efforts to respond to accountability demands were the basis for discussions among 14 representatives of educational organisations in New South Wales, Australia, and about 50 educators in Alberta, Canada. The Australian participants included officials from a department of education, teachers, school administrators, and professors. Their Canadian counterparts consisted of teachers, school administrators, and school board members, along with graduate students and professors from two Alberta universities.

Webber and Townsend report that the timing of the discussions had a strong influence on the tone and content of the dialogue. As might be expected given the case studies described above by Cuttance et al., the representatives from New South Wales reported more than 4 years of systemic turbulence ascribable to a strategy of "devolution" intended by the government of the day to break up the large bureaucracy that once was the New South Wales Department of Education. Alberta educators, on the other hand, were in the middle of the first full year of an educational reform agenda, based loosely on New Zealand's radical reforms reported by Timperley and Robinson above and on the economic and structural theories of Sir Roger Douglas (see, e.g., Douglas, 1993), theories that have recently reduced Canadian provincial spending on public education by about 12%.

Those in attendance participated in a series of structured large-group presentations and focus group discussions. The most salient elements of the institutional and political contexts within which accountability policies have been implemented in each system were revealed. At one level, the themes are about the motives of politicians balanced by the need of educators to accept responsibility for ensuring the appropriateness and the effectiveness of teaching practices, for the quality of the teaching profession, and for convincing a doubtful public of the value of public education. At another level, there was a belief that accountability is a corollary of professional responsibility and a crucial adjunct to centralist political and administrative systems.

Political Ideology

Renée Kuchapski provided Chapter 13. Given the recurrent problem alluded to by many former chapters, it was appropriate that the political use of

the term *accountability* should come under scrutiny. Kuchapski uses Manzer's liberal framework to conceptualise accountability as an abstraction of political ideology. Manzer's original framework traversed political liberalism, economic liberalism, ethical liberalism, and technological liberalism. Kuchapski uses it to illustrate the nature of accountability criteria and processes, and then links this nature to visions of the public good and onto the principles and elements that support the concept of accountability. This analytic treatment leads her to a less ideological and more comprehensive view of the activities and the associated rhetoric typically subsumed by the term. The tension between two normative theories in competition forms the centrepiece of her chapter: person-centred liberalism and technological liberalism. Kuchapski concludes that accountability will continue to serve as a valuable political touchstone, that is, as the intersection between the hopes we have for education and society.

Centralism and Pluralism in Liberal Democratic Politics

Chapter 14, by Kenneth A. Strike, is the penultimate chapter in Part II. He asks if centralised goal formation is inconsistent with a reasonable form of pluralism. The international call for centralised standards has emphasised instructional efficacy, he claims, but less attention has been paid to how reform is related to the political roles of schooling. He begins with a case that national or state curriculum standards can be in tension with some aspirations of liberal democratic societies. Active central government determining educational purposes can be viewed as inconsistent with intellectual liberty. Curriculum frameworks developed at the state or national level can also be viewed as inconsistent with cultural or religious pluralism.

Strike notes that some liberal societies are associated with strong and historically grounded national cultures. In these societies, it is usually assumed that it is appropriate for the state to promote a national culture, so long as adequate space is provided for debate and dissenting practices. Thus, although the state respects such rights as free speech, press, and religion, its schools are not required to be neutral about the national culture.

Some believe, he observes, that this form of liberalism is inappropriate for the United States, whose citizens have roots in a wide variety of nationalities and cultures. The view often taken is that in the United States, the government—and therefore its schools—has a duty to seek a higher level of neutrality between different cultures.

Any society that wishes to achieve reasonable stability has to produce citizens who respect, understand, and can function within its central institutions. Producing such citizens is a role assigned to the society's schools.

However, as Strike argues, in liberal democratic societies, it is not always clear what this requires nor when the state's desire to produce good citizens

has become too expansive. Those who seek a high level of neutrality for the state generally see the schools' role as one of transmitting the essential values of the political culture of a liberal democratic society but seek to limit their socialising role to these central values. Others argue that liberal democratic institutions are only likely to be stable against the background of a widely shared national culture. He argues that statewide accountability measures should reflect what is essential to the public interest and avoid dominating the values of one subculture with those of another. The catch is being able to define the public interest.

In Chapter 15, the final chapter in Part II of this book, we tease out some implications of the whole collection for practice, theory, and further research.

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PART I

North American Politics of Accountability

2

Fiscal Accountability for Low-Wealth School Districts

Perceptions and Consequences of High Local Taxes for Education Governance

DAVID H. MONK, EMIL J. HALLER, and JANIE L. NUSSER

This chapter reports on a New York State study about the use of indicator data to improve local school district accountability for performance. The New York State Board of Regents identified several structural conditions that were believed to create productivity difficulties for school districts and sought insight into how these impediments affect the accountability of school officials for performance. The identified structural condition that is of concern here is a high property tax rate coupled with a low level of wealth. Local property taxes are a major source of revenue for schools in New York State, and by choosing districts with a high tax rate and low local wealth, the Regents signaled their desire to know more about how impoverished communities meet their responsibility to educate resident students. These school districts are particularly interesting for study since, despite (or perhaps because of) their low wealth, they chose to tax themselves at unusually high rates. Thus, these districts can be thought of as settings where resources are low but where the will to provide educational services is high. In this chapter, we report what we learned about these districts and place the findings in the larger context of what can be learned about the use of indicator data to improve the accountability of schooling units. We begin by describing our research methods and then move to a presentation of findings. The chapter concludes with a discussion about implications.

RESEARCH METHODS

State data facilitated the selection of school districts with high tax rates and low levels of wealth. Only districts falling into the top decile of tax rates were considered districts with "high" tax rates, and this translated into having a tax rate higher than $20 per $1,000 of full-value property wealth. Low wealth was defined as being less than 50% of the statewide average combined wealth ratio. New York State uses a combined wealth ratio to measure its districts' fiscal capacity. It is based on both property wealth and income levels of each community. From this population, the New York State Education Department selected six sites for further analysis.

We visited each of these sites and conducted interviews with school officials, organized a focus group with community leaders, and completed a telephone survey with a random sample of community residents. Prior to each visit, we assembled a large amount of comparative data that were used in the interview process. For example, regarding tax rates, we entered the district knowing how the tax rate of the district compared with that of neighboring districts as well as with that of other, similar districts throughout the state. Each of the participating districts received a detailed site report that provided information about how the district in question compares with other districts in the state that have similar structural characteristics. For example, the site reports included comparisons between the individual districts and districts of similar size, fiscal capacity, and socioeconomic status. The site reports also include information about the results of the interviews, focus groups, and telephone surveys.

Presumably all school districts work to contain costs while maintaining programs, but this struggle is obviously more of a burden in some districts than in others. For example, the poorest districts may be reasonably assumed to be well versed in balancing competing interests (i.e., course offerings, teachers' salaries, administrative overhead, small class sizes, transportation, and so on) and competing stakeholder claims (i.e., taxpayers, the state, teachers, and parents). When a high tax rate is a concomitant of relative poverty, however, additional stress accompanies districts' efforts to weigh these opposing interests. In addition to surveying the tactics used by the six districts we studied to deal with their low-wealth status, we examine both the factors influencing the decision to tax at a higher-than-average rate and the devices these districts used to persuade residents to accept the resulting tax burdens.

FINDINGS

Situational Influences

Contextual and idiosyncratic factors are important to understanding the responses of low-wealth and high-tax districts. Historical features, demo-

graphics, and the local economy influenced the strategies employed by district administrators and officials to meet the challenges imposed by the fiscal stress that was present in the community.

The history of a district's relationship with its residents set expectations and constrained current actions. These expectations and constraints were manifested in both program and expenditure realms, and in some cases, a district's history contributed to a community's high programmatic expectations while simultaneously fostering a kind of fatalism and cautiousness about fiscal matters. In one district, a history of fiscal conservativism contributed to the board's decision to consolidate its elementary schools, and yet the community was concurrently described as holding the schools accountable for maintaining a high level of access to expensive advanced courses. An embezzlement episode in another district, resulting in community distrust of administrators, had a similar effect of forcing administrators to move slowly and carefully on fiscal matters. At the same time, however, a large contingency of district parents who had moved there from troubled city systems appeared determined to maintain the district's reputation in the area as an academically high-performing district. In a third community, a merger of two districts in the 1970s contributed to residents' current skittishness about consolidating their elementary schools. Residents felt that the 1970s merger had resulted in damage to local communities and feared that similar damage would follow any further consolidation of the district's schools. Residents were willing to shoulder a higher tax rate to retain their elementary school buildings. The administration responded by supporting the community's wishes on this issue, regardless of potentially negative fiscal and/or programmatic consequences. In two other districts, past community defeats of merger proposals contributed to their stance against merger and helped to explain residents' willingness to carry an unusually high tax burden. In one of these, the stance against a possible merger was so strong that residents were willing to "make do" with constrained curricular offerings, overcrowded conditions, larger-than-average class sizes at the elementary level, and low teachers' salaries.

In addition to the influence of historical factors on fiscal and programmatic issues in the low-wealth and high-tax districts was the influence of situationally specific demographic features. For example, the Amish population in one community buttressed an attitude of caution about district spending, because, even though Amish children did not attend the public schools, their parents did vote on school issues and were recruited by the local taxpayer group to do so. Another demographic presence in a second community was the existence of a higher educational institution, which respondents believed had served a number of useful purposes, such as providing the district with academically oriented students, imbuing the district with high academic expectations, and contributing to a focus on their college-bound clientele.

Finally, the local economy could exert a conservative influence on expenditures, as was the case in four districts. In two instances, local economic decline was tied to a volatile agrarian economy that had resulted in the loss of farms and depressed milk prices. In two other cases, plant closings were said to have seriously depressed the tax base. In each of these four districts, the instability and debility of the economic base, with their attendant negative effects on employment, income levels, and expectations, shaped the community's desire to take a "steady as she goes" attitude toward school expenditures and tax increases.

The expectations and attitudes accruing from these historical, demographic, and local economic factors in some cases prevailed over potential alternative district responses to fiscal stress. Perhaps in part because the districts we studied were all rural and located in small communities, and in part because residents felt a stronger-than-average sense of ownership in their schools because of their larger-than-average personal financial investment in them, these communities described themselves as "closely knit," and they sometimes displayed a high level of discourse about school district conditions and decisions. The strategies chosen for responding to low wealth and a high tax rate, therefore, can be seen as products of both the district and the community. Although personnel and officials were hardly passive in the districts we studied, they were highly sensitive to community discourse. When administrators and board members took the initiative on school policy, these initiatives were as much a reflection of community wishes as they were a challenge to them.

Local Strategies for Building Tolerance for High Tax Rates

Perhaps the most ubiquitous strategy we found was the *promotion of the community's self-perception as unique*. With impressive specificity, our case study narratives are sprinkled with explanations about why it is uniquely difficult for these communities to raise money for their schools. Residents tend to see these conditions as unique to their communities and as the root cause of the necessity for high tax rates. In one district, for example, because it housed what was once a large federal project, only 10% of its property is taxable. Two additional districts likewise blamed substantial tax-exempt property for at least a portion of their high taxes. Three districts cited large senior citizen populations as depressing their tax base, and four districts pointed to a declining economy. There is no reason to believe that these observations are inaccurate. It is also clear that these contextual features have contributed to each district's identity. What is compelling in respondents' explanations, however, is the fatalism that permeated them. The attitude was, "We have no tax base, so we must tax at a high rate."

A second closely related strategy was to *promote the community's self-perception as beleaguered by outside forces*. In one instance, administrators were able to benefit from residents' unpleasant memories of a failed merger attempt with a neighboring district. It was pointed out repeatedly to district residents that if the merger had succeeded, the district would be operating more efficiently and taxes would be lower. Part of the refusal came from the neighboring community, and this made it possible to blame the neighbors for the ongoing high tax rates.

In another district, a former administrator was held responsible for the current high tax rate because he continued to increase taxes in the 1980s despite the fact that state aid was increasing and enrollments were decreasing during the period. In four other districts, the state was identified as the culprit. The state's refusal to increase its payment in lieu of taxes (for state-owned lands) allowed residents in one district to shift the focus of their frustration outside the district and see their high tax rate as something beyond their control. Administrators in two other districts repeatedly maintained to taxpayers that inviolate state mandates were to be blamed for the districts' high tax rates. The state was similarly blamed by another district's administrator, who maintained that cuts in state aid in the early 1990s resulted in undue upward pressure on the local tax rate.

These kinds of scapegoating arguments, initiated in some instances by district officials and in others by the community itself, produced an "us-against-them" posture that, in turn, translated into a fierce sense of protectiveness of their own districts. Consequently, in most of the districts we studied, there was a sense of pride about the schools as well as about their willingness to burden themselves, despite the fact that a number of these districts contain very few residents who have higher-than-average incomes.

We found little evidence of districts' efforts to disabuse taxpayers of their perceptions of their districts as facing unique fiscal stresses externally imposed. Although respondents were generally cognizant that they were being taxed at a high rate, they were often far less certain about how their district's wealth characteristics and tax rates compared to their neighbors and to districts facing similar fiscal constraints. Thus, a third strategy was to *showcase the tax rate in the most favorable light possible and to deflect attention from the absolute value of the rate*.

One district was particularly adept at capitalizing on widespread confusion about the property tax and the tax rate. School administrators pointed to a decline in the property tax rate in the time period following the date when the state identified it as a high-tax district for the purpose of this study. Despite the fact that this tax rate is still the third highest of the 17 districts in its county, administrators directed taxpayers' attention to these recent rate decreases. As a result, respondents in this community sometimes expressed surprise that

their district was considered to be in the highest 10% of high-tax districts in the state. These respondents also asserted that the tax rate is a poor measure of burden, claiming that the better measure is the actual dollar amount of the tax bill. So long as the dollar amount stays modest, they said, people do not pay much attention to the rate of the tax. Although this was perhaps an extreme instance, few besides a small subset of administrators in any of these districts were familiar with how their tax rate compares with that of the past and how it compares with that of other similarly situated districts.

Two other tactics designed to minimize local concern about the absolute value of the tax rate emerged from our data. One was to stress modest year-to-year changes in the tax rate (not the absolute level as compared to other districts in the state). Districts thus avoided rate spikes as a way to mollify taxpayers' concerns about rate increases. Second, in all of the districts, administrators and board officials worked to stay in touch with the level of rate increases that taxpayers would tolerate. This technique involved identifying a "magic number," a percentage budget or tax increase beyond which they sensed taxpayers would revolt. Although these numbers were subjectively generated, there was some evidence that such a strategy could bear fruit. In one district, for example, a watchdog group formed to ensure that the proposed budget increase would not exceed 3%. When the proposed budget came in under 3%, the watchdog group retreated, despite the fact that the subsequent tax increase (ascribable to an unexpected reduction in state aid) was more than 10%.

By supporting the community's self-perception as uniquely and externally burdened, and by presenting the tax rate in as positive a light as possible, administrators and officials pursued a fourth strategy, which involved using *fiscal stress as an issue around which to rally the community*. All of the districts in our sample were rural, small-town districts, and this fact may have further enhanced a sense of community cohesion. This was particularly noteworthy in four districts where community solidarity was expressed explicitly and in very positive terms. "We're all in this together," said one respondent. "Our district is a family," remarked another, "and we take care of our own." The two districts experiencing the highest level of controversy presented less unified fronts. Respondents in these two districts focused on external enemies but did not talk as much about the positive aspects of their communities.

The fifth and final strategy was to *appease taxpayers through extensive community contact*. One tactic was to take a proactive stance to taxpayers' groups, including attending meetings, providing information, and generally monitoring their activities. One superintendent extended this proactive stance by speaking to various civic groups about the school budget process, and several administrators used newsletters for similar purposes, including fostering their image as cost-conscious public servants, as well as feeding the

community's self-perception as uniquely beleaguered. A second approach was to stimulate community input. All of the districts used shared decision-making teams and committees to promote community support and solidarity. One district even distributed "community family input sheets" through their local paper. Residents were asked a variety of questions and could drop off their answers in convenient places, such as supermarkets. Third, most of the districts deliberately kept their buildings open for public use, hoping to induce a sense of community ownership of the schools. Universally, our sample districts sought community input and worked to keep their communities informed. It is not clear, however, that the results of these efforts were universally positive. The district beset by the most intense level of strife, for example, was also the one with the most extensive outreach program.

The responses mentioned so far constitute what are largely public relations stances and rhetorical devices mediated to a large extent by either community historical narratives or other contextual and idiosyncratic factors. Although the degree to which these devices were consciously and deliberately constructed by district officials was not always clear, administrators in every instance made use of communal and institutional stories to persuade taxpayers to assume a higher-than-average tax rate.

Local Strategies for Containing Costs

We turn now to the districts' efforts to contain costs, a significant by-product of the accountability implicit in facing a modest wealth base. It is important to remember that cost containment did not always occur at the expense of the community's programmatic expectations. In the more successful cases, districts' choices of cost-containment strategies complemented their programmatic choices, and both were deeply embedded in the community's contextual factors.

Because building utilization and maintenance allow for a degree of fiscal manipulation, it is not surprising that several of the districts we studied chose strategies designed to *maximize the efficiency of their buildings*. In three instances, administrators spoke of energy-saving strategies that made the operation of their buildings more efficient. One district elected to reorganize by closing its two outlying elementary schools to locate all school programs at the same site. This strategy was selected deliberately as a cost-saving measure, was presented to taxpayers as such, and proved to be acceptable in this community because it did not curtail efforts to provide advanced placement courses and other programs aimed at academically oriented students. Long-term overcrowding was a complaint in four districts, and there was some evidence that these districts had chosen to enhance their programs rather than their buildings. An opposite approach was taken in the district whose residents elected to maintain their outlying community schools. Here we

found evidence of some underutilization at the secondary level, a situation that may not have existed if the district had had more leeway in consolidating its buildings. Evidence also surfaced in this district suggesting that one trade-off for keeping the community schools intact may have been to constrain offerings at the secondary level. Deferred maintenance was another building-related strategy common to this group of districts; in fact, at least one district may consciously have deferred maintenance, hoping to shift maintenance costs to the state by taking advantage of proportionately higher state aid for capital projects. Major capital projects are planned in a number of these districts.

Strict budget review was a second cost-saving approach in these districts, accompanied by a concerted effort in all but one district to avoid unnecessary costs and to minimize peripheral expenditures. "Is it truly important? Do we really need this? And if we really do need it, is there an alternative way of providing it?" Minimal materials and supplies budgets were common, and teachers were often credited with procuring or constructing many of the instructional materials used in their classrooms. Furthermore, these districts tended toward lean administrative staffs. When assistant superintendents existed, they performed more than their usual tasks; in the smaller districts, superintendents took on principal duties; and one of the larger districts in the sample employed no assistant principals.

Interestingly enough, however, these districts did not generally attempt to save money by cutting their instructional staffing costs, although the district that was "making do" claimed that its teachers had subsidized the district for years through lower-than-average salaries. In the other districts, however, salaries were fairly typical of those found in surrounding communities, and one official from an academically oriented district claimed, "We'll cut maintenance before we'll cut a teacher." Another academically focused district, in an effort to save on teachers' salaries without sacrificing its academic program, split teaching position duties between those of aides and teachers, thereby being able to employ two subject matter teachers for the price of one teacher and one aide. However, there was evidence in four districts that teachers' salaries were resented because they were higher than the average income of the residents. This resentment was especially close to the surface in the communities that were experiencing the highest levels of taxpayer controversy.

A third common approach was to *limit academic program offerings*. Maintaining a program that consists only of the essentials can make high taxes seem less grievous and may, in fact, actually save money. One respondent spoke of having many fine programs, but "nothing extra," not even money for field trips. Two districts focused on an academic, "all-Regents" program. In three districts, a narrow selection of elective offerings was a concern. Some districts responded to curricular constraints by specializing. Because these districts did not have the fiscal wherewithal to offer a broad array of courses

and programs, they sometimes fostered an identity as one that serves a particular population through a "showcase" program that performs a public relations function and is used to justify higher taxes. An expensive special education program and extensive foreign language curriculum were thus used in one district, a drama program in another, and a strong academic program in a third.

We found evidence suggesting that the tendency to narrow the focus of the curriculum has adverse implications for students not normally served by the district's chosen focus. For example, the district that emphasized special education may have sacrificed the needs of its more traditionally academically talented pupils. In contrast, the district that pushed a Regents' program and a commitment to advanced placement courses was occasionally described as not serving less academically oriented students well. It was unclear from the data whether the one district we studied that was attempting to cover both ends of the academic spectrum experienced differences in either economies or student performance as a result. An allegedly successful response to one district's change in student background characteristics from academically oriented, college-bound pupils to an increase in what one respondent described as "the lower academic tail of the curve" was to target resources and efforts toward the creation of an inclusionary and integrated program. This emphasis allowed administrators to put instructional resources back into the "middle portion of the curve" rather than to "split resources between the upper and lower ends."

A fourth approach to cost containment was to *take full advantage of state aid*. One district in particular stands out in this regard, where administrators spoke eloquently about the importance of "staying on top of" their district's aid eligibility. Financing the maintenance of buildings through interest earned on state aid received and using state aid for transportation to build a reserve for bus purchases were two examples. One administrator was said to have "found" $400,000 in unclaimed aid for his district.

Fifth, administrators talked about *shared services* as a cost-containing strategy. One district seemed to be ahead of the others in this regard, but even there, service sharing was not unduly extensive. This district shared a business manager through the local Board of Cooperative Educational Service (BOCES), shared some equipment with local municipalities, and occasionally shared transportation and staff training with other districts. All districts we studied shared to a minimal degree, and respondents in two expressed the hope that their districts would increase their level of service sharing in the future. Most districts likewise took advantage of BOCES-aided services, although two maintained that greater savings could be realized by avoiding BOCES's special education services and instead providing special education within the district.

DISCUSSION

All of the districts we studied used effective public relations stances and processes to engender in their communities a sense that (a) high tax rates are a result of unique circumstances, (b) high tax rates are essential if community-desired programs are to be maintained, and (c) high tax rates are not as they appear, because they have increased only slowly and can result in relatively low absolute payments. These would probably be useful strategies for any administrator to employ if his or her goal is to maintain a high tax rate. It is not entirely apparent, however, that this goal is necessarily a worthy one.

We also found that these districts appeared to be exceptionally attentive to expenditure issues. Officials consciously attempted to save on energy costs, to restrict severely the flow of superfluous materials and supplies, to "count every penny" in the budget, to encourage cost-consciousness in their staff, and to locate and use to the fullest possible extent all sources of state aid and BOCES aid. We seldom found extensive service-sharing arrangements, and we found no evidence of obvious wastefulness in any of the districts we studied.

As for efforts to maintain programs, these districts elected to offer a "bare-bones" curriculum and, in some cases, to focus on a showcase program. One strategy was to supply resources into an integrated and inclusionary program, which allowed the district to target all but the extreme ends of the academic spectrum. In general, these districts did not produce unusual ways to expand their course offerings; instead, they seemed to have their hands full trying to maintain what they already have. Somewhat surprisingly, however, we did not hear much discussion of officials' attempts to lower the tax rate. Although officials were highly sensitive to the rate hikes citizens would approve, lowering the tax rate did not appear to be a priority.

Despite efforts to contain costs and to mobilize community support for high tax rates, these districts were generally left with an uneasy peace. Taxpayers' acquiescence to high tax rates in these districts was decidedly tenuous. In one district, although there was no currently active taxpayer group, residents were described as wary of doing anything that would increase taxes. Each of the two districts that have not had to deal with taxpayer groups has achieved positive and long-standing academic reputations with their communities. These communities have been very attentive to taxpayer issues.

Evidence of recent or current taxpayer groups surfaced in four of the districts we studied. Although the current strength of these groups varied, fiscal stress was a touchstone. Controversy was readily visible in one district, where board meetings had, according to district responses, become shouting matches. Even though the watchdog group was quiet for the time being in another district, administrators were worried about how next year's budget

would fare. In yet another instance, a taxpayer group was awarded a break in its rate last year, and this group continues to monitor the district's budget. If fiscal stress is a tyrant in these districts, taxpayers may be sleeping giants.

The districts in our sample all worked hard to encourage the public to support the high tax rates and to contain costs. What stands out as perhaps our most striking finding is how unaware residents and most of the school officials were of how high the tax rate in their district was compared with that of other districts similarly situated. We believe that there is insufficient understanding of how parents and community residents think about, and react to, high tax burdens, and we are convinced that there is more to establishing and maintaining high local tax burdens in the face of low wealth than is commonly realized. This finding, coupled with the findings from other parts of the study suggesting that community residents are primarily concerned with the quality of students' educational experiences (Monk, Haller, Nusser, & Ford, 1996; Monk, Nusser, & Roellke, 1997), is very telling. The administrators we studied have become adept at "managing" high tax burdens. We take no position regarding the appropriateness of the practice but stress the importance of knowing more about it. It strikes us as one of the little-understood by-products of complex and decentralized administrative decision-making structures such as those we use commonly in the United States. As states and other more centralized authorities move toward holding districts such as these more accountable for improved performance, these locally derived high-tax effort strategies will become increasingly important.

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3

Can Integrated Governance Reconstruct Teaching?

Lessons Learned From Two Low-Performing Chicago High Schools

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In 1995, the Illinois state legislature declared that an "educational crisis" existed in Chicago and passed the Chicago School Reform Amendatory Act (Illinois State Assembly, 1995). In contrast to the decentralization initiated by the 1988 Chicago School Reform Act, the 1995 act integrated school governance by placing authority for the public schools under the control of the mayor, reducing the number of policy actors who compete for decision-making authority, and expanding the financial and management powers of the district administration (Wong, Dreeben, Lynn, & Sunderman, 1997; Wong & Sunderman, 1996). Furthermore, the act directed the newly established Reform Board of Trustees and chief executive officer (CEO) to increase the quality of educational services within the system by giving the CEO power to place poorly performing schools on remediation, probation, and intervention. The new district administration swiftly used these expanded powers to broaden the system's political base of support. In its first year, the administration built public confidence by tightening the maintenance of school buildings and by adeptly using the local media to expose waste and to publicize its responsiveness to community groups. It also garnered business support through reorganizing the district's central office through downsizing and privatization. In its second year, the administration instituted a sweeping probation policy. It placed 109 schools, or 20% of the district's elementary and high schools, on probation and directed them to raise student achievement

on standardized tests or run the risk of reconstitution. Although the new district administration effectively used the integrated governance structure established by the 1995 act to improve operations management and to strengthen the system's political base, reconstructing teaching to improve student achievement presents a much more difficult challenge. In this chapter, we examine the effects of the district's probation policy on curricular and instructional practices in two low-performing Chicago high schools. After establishing the policy context of probation, we employ a policy implementation perspective and the notion of the street-level bureaucrat to examine how district officials, school administrators, and teachers respond to probation. Our central concern is whether or not probation can lead to significant changes in classroom teaching.

THE POLICY CONTEXT OF PROBATION

The Chicago School Reform Amendatory Act (Illinois State Assembly, 1995) gives Chicago's CEO the authority to place low-performing schools on probation. The Illinois School Code states that the CEO can determine if a school is not remediable and place that school on probation. The code requires that schools on probation must have a school improvement plan (SIP) that includes both specific steps that the local school council (LSC) and school staff can take to correct deficiencies and "objective" criteria by which to judge the school's progress. The code allows probation schools to identify external technical assistance to be paid for by schools' discretionary funds. If the board determines that a school has failed "to make adequate progress in correcting deficiencies," the school code states that the CEO can order new LSC elections, replace principals and faculty, enact the more intensive intervention procedure, and eventually close the school (Illinois State Board of Education, 1996).

The district's extensive use of probation represents an attempt to respond to increasingly skeptical political opinion. State legislators have linked funding increases to the district's educational and financial performance, and political leaders and the public have become more reliant on test scores as an indicator of school quality. The district used the probation provision in the 1995 Amendatory Act to define accountability in terms of standardized test scores. The district placed on probation those schools with fewer than 15% of their students scoring at or above the national norm on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), for elementary schools, or the Test of Academic Proficiency (TAP), for high schools.

The district's focus on probation also relates to the new administration's adept use of its expanded and managerial powers. The administration's swift resolution of the district's fiscal crises and strengthening of its political base

TABLE 3.1 Average Percentage of Students Scoring at National Norms on the Test of Academic Proficiency (TAP)

Subject		*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*	*1994*	*1995*	*1996*	*1997*
District high school average	Reading	25.9	22.9	19.7	20.5	17.0	18.6	15.9	19.5
	Math	17.3	16.7	17.2	20.1	20.0	19.9	16.5	24.1
Probation high school average	Reading	14.8	12.6	10.2	10.2	7.6	9.6	7.5	10.5
	Math	8.7	8.0	8.4	10.2	6.6	10.8	8.4	14.3

SOURCE: Chicago Public Schools (1997).

set the stage for a renewed focus on an educational agenda. In January 1996, the board placed 21 schools on remediation for failing to meet state standards as determined by students' scores on the state assessment. The previous administration had placed only six schools on remediation. The mayor, Richard Daley, also seemed ready to spend some of his political capital to improve the schools. The two top district officials, the president of the board and the CEO, served as the mayor's chief of staff and city budget director, respectively. In addition to appointments that linked the schools to city hall, the mayor also declared a war on "low performance," thus signaling his willingness to risk undertaking the massive effort of probation.

Finally, the board's use of probation follows almost a decade of efforts to improve schools through decentralization initiated by the 1988 Chicago School Reform Act (General Superintendent of Schools, 1988). These efforts produced uneven results, particularly among the lowest performing schools. Probation gives the district broad powers to intervene in schools that have been performing poorly for several years. Table 3.1 shows the average percentage of students scoring at or above the national norm on the TAP in high schools across the district and in probation high schools during the past 8 years.

Table 3.1 indicates the persistence of low performance in the high schools placed on probation and in district high schools overall. Whereas the average percentage of students scoring at national norms in reading in the probation schools ranges from 7.5 to 14.8 during the 8-year period, the average across the district's high schools ranges only from 15.9 to 25.9. The probation schools have a significantly lower percentage, but the district average itself is low. At the highest point, less than 30% of students in the districts' high schools score at the national norm in reading. The same holds true for math. Clearly, the district faces severe challenges in improving high schools across the district.

The new administration has used probation as the centerpiece of its attempts to meet the challenge of poorly performing schools. Although the policy narrowly focuses on test scores as the means of evaluating school performance, it also enables the board to intervene extensively in how schools function. The district has created three new positions—probation managers, external partners, and business managers—to monitor and support improvements in the administration, instruction, and fiscal operations of probation schools.

TWO ANALYTIC PERSPECTIVES

To understand the effects of integrated governance on teaching, we need to consider the complexities of both the organizational structure of schools and the teaching task. We draw on two theoretical perspectives that take into account the multilayered nature of school organization and the uncertainties inherent in the teaching task: the implementation perspective and the notion of the "street-level bureaucrat." The former offers insights into how the interactions between actors at various organizational levels constrain and facilitate change, whereas the latter provides insight into how the nature of the teaching task influences the success or failure of accountability policies such as probation.

Implementation Perspective

Wong (1992) identified two strands of studies in the implementation literature. The first consists of studies conducted in the 1960s and 1970s that examined a wide range of policy topics, such as compensatory education, busing programs, and employment programs. These studies found that the complex intergovernmental administrative structures of these programs resulted in confusion, conflict, and program failure (Martin & McClure, 1969; Murphy, 1971; Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973). In contrast, the studies that compose the second strand of implementation literature highlight accommodation among the various actors involved in implementing new programs. Peterson, Rabe, and Wong (1986) identified three phases in the implementation of compensatory education programs. In the initial phase, the programs lack specific guidelines, giving schools vast discretion. In the next stage, federal policymakers introduce regulations that local officials resist. Over time, federal, state, and local administrators work out their differences. Recruitment of professionals who identify with program goals, federal-level relaxation of regulations, and state mediation between federal and local levels all facilitate program adjustments and enable local officials to focus on instructional improvements.

Later implementation studies found that local contexts influence whether or not schools successfully implement programmatic changes. A school district's fiscal condition, political culture, and the policy-making autonomy of program professionals influence the pace at which a district moves from the conflictual to the accommodative phase of implementation. Districts with weak fiscal capacity and strong political influence over programs suffer more severe and prolonged conflict, whereas those with strong fiscal capacity, autonomous program professionals, and, most of all, teacher commitment to policy objectives more rapidly move to accommodation (Elmore, 1980; Wong, 1990).

Street-Level Bureaucrats

The second perspective we employ is Michael Lipsky's (1980) notion of the street-level bureaucrat. Street-level bureaucrats, such as teachers, work directly with the clients of public service agencies and have a high degree of discretion over their work. Lipsky argues that street-level bureaucrats, in effect, make organizational policy through the routines and categories they develop to reduce the endemic uncertainties of their tasks.

These routines and categories often place street-level bureaucrats in conflict with managers and official policymakers, particularly in the area of agency objectives and accountability. Whereas public organizations promote universalistic goals, the street-level bureaucrats must deal with the particularistic nature of their clients' needs (see also Bidwell, 1965; Lortie, 1975).

Chronically inadequate resources, ambiguous goals, and nonvoluntary clients compound the difficulties that street-level bureaucrats encounter in doing an adequate job. Lipsky argues that street-level bureaucrats respond by developing routines and simplifications that limit demands and restrict organizational objectives to reduce the gap between available resources and actual performance. Street-level bureaucrats control the time and content of their interactions with clients in ways that redefine their work and assert their own personal goals over and above agency goals. In addition, when poor performance is exposed, street-level bureaucrats defend their routine practices and locate responsibility for client difficulties within the client, the clients' environment, or both.

Summary

The two perspectives predict that a considerable amount of organizational conflict will arise with the implementation of Chicago's probation policy. According to the implementation perspective, school-level administrators are likely to struggle with broadly stated policies. We expect to see conflict between actors at the state, district, and school levels concerning who has authority over various aspects of probation. Implementation literature also

predicts that the schools will accommodate to the policy by making incremental changes in programmatic, personnel, and resource allocation decisions. Lipsky's model suggests that teachers are likely to respond to probation by routinizing instruction in ways that restrict the objectives of probation, allow them to maintain some personalization of instructional goals, and reduce the demands inherent in teaching. Given that probation exposes school- and teacher-level failure, teachers are expected to defend their routine practices against change.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA COLLECTION

To examine the probation policy from the two analytic perspectives, we used a variety of data collection strategies. At the district level, we collected and analyzed district documents concerning probation. We also conducted 14 semistructured interviews with central office staff from various offices, including the directors of the Offices of School Interventions, High School Restructuring, and Teacher Accountability, and the chief education officer and the accountability officer.

At the school level, we developed case studies of two low-performing high schools. We collected data in these schools before and during the first year of probation. Our data consist of semistructured interviews with the principals, administrators, and math and English teachers. We selected math and English because average student scores in these subjects are the criteria for probation. We then interviewed 10 of 13 English teachers, 12 of 13 math teachers, and 7 administrators in School A, and 11 of 13 English teachers, all 10 math teachers, and 3 administrators in School B. In addition, we observed 5 to 8 teachers who teach freshman-level courses in each school. Over the course of 2 weeks, observers kept narrative accounts of classroom activities of at least four sessions of one freshman course taught by each teacher. Observers also conducted pre- and postobservation interviews with each teacher. Finally, we collected school documents, including the SIP, the corrective action plan (CAP), and school curriculum guides.

The two high schools differ in terms of school organization, reform history, and student achievement. School A, located in one of the poorest neighborhoods in Chicago, has a 100% African American student body, 80% of which is classified as low-income. The school adopted site-based management more than a decade ago and has been a member of the Coalition of Essential Schools, a national reform movement, for more than 6 years. These efforts have placed School A at the forefront of reform efforts in the Chicago area. For example, School A adopted block scheduling, currently being considered by the district as a mandatory reform, 5 years ago. Faculty from many area high schools have visited School A to observe the scheduling.

School A was placed under supervision by the district's Office of Accountability in January 1995. The district provided School A with external partners whom the school selected from a small group of proposals. The external partners were charged with helping the school to improve students' scores on the state assessment.

School B is located in a middle-class neighborhood. The school's student body, however, differs from the neighborhood population. School B has an ethnically diverse student body that is 95% low-income. The school has few teacher committees, although the new instructional coordinator recently created writing and reading task forces. School B's principal initiated an environmental theme that has earned the school three presidential citations; however, School B has few connections to national reform groups. Whereas teachers and administrators in School A pride themselves on being "innovators," School B more closely represents a traditional comprehensive high school.

The schools' student achievement levels also differ. The average percentage of students in School A scoring at the national norm in reading during the past 8 years is 6.3; in math, it is 6.2. After 6 months on probation and 7 months on supervision, School A showed no improvement; TAP reading scores actually went down, from 5.1% of students scoring at or above the national norm in 1996 to 4.7% in 1997. The average percentage of students scoring at the national norm in reading over the past 8 years in School B is 19.5, and in math, the percentage is 19.1. After 6 months of probation, School B's scores improved from 11.6% of students scoring at or above the national average on the TAP reading test in 1996 to 22.1% in 1997. Given School B's 8-year average, the 1996 average, which served as the criterion for probation, appears to be an anomaly.

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PROBATION: CONFLICT AND ACCOMMODATION

Multiple Patterns of Organizational Conflict

As anticipated by implementation literature, the district's implementation of probation, in its initial phase, has produced conflict between actors at various levels of the school system. At the district and state levels, the district administration bypassed the Academic Accountability Council established by the 1995 Amendatory Act to oversee the district's intervention in low-performing schools. The district and state boards jointly appoint the council, which has the authority to develop school evaluations and to recommend which schools to place on remediation, probation, or intervention. The CEO

placed the 109 schools on probation without consulting the council. Members of the council have complained of being marginalized.

A greater degree of confusion and conflict concerning probation exists among and between district-level and school-level actors. In part, this stems from the vague wording of the Illinois school code. The code provides the district with specific strategies for intervening in schools but does not specify how the district should identify low-performing schools.

The district's decision to measure school performance with standardized test scores resulted in confusion at both the district level and the school level. Central office documents concerning probation reflect competing notions of school improvement at the district level. Some district officials advocate a long-term approach that emphasizes high standards, improving school climate and promoting student-centered instructional practices. Other officials advocate a narrow focus on standardized test scores. Probation documents hold schools accountable for improving test scores and for creating a climate of "personalism and caring" that facilitates teacher collaboration (Chicago Public Schools, 1996a).

At the school level, principals and teachers report frustration and confusion arising from the district's use of the TAP. School A was one of the few schools placed on supervision before probation. The district criterion for supervision was 3 years of poor performance on the state assessment, the Illinois Goals Assessment Program (IGAP), not the TAP. While supervision focused on the IGAP, the district changed the criteria for probation. Similarly, School B had directed its efforts in the 1995-1996 school year on improving the school's scores on the IGAP writing exam. The school made significant gains, increasing the school's average score by 13 points from the previous year. Teachers in School B expressed anger over the district's decision to focus on the TAP rather than the IGAP. Teachers said that they had been told at staff meetings in the spring of 1995 that the district planned to eliminate the TAP. School B's instructional coordinator reports that the school responded by not focusing on that test at all.

In addition to the confusion created by the district's decision to measure school performance with the TAP scores, district guidelines do not specify how schools will be released from probation. Teachers in both School A and School B believe that probation will end once they raise test scores; both principals, however, believe that probation will last at least 2 years, regardless of test scores, and that they will be judged by other criteria that the district had yet to establish.

Along with confusion, conflict between school and district actors has arisen from the district's introduction of new actors into the schools with administrative and instructional authority. Probation managers hold veto

power over the actions the principal takes while on probation, external partners possess authority over instruction, and school operations managers control each school's fiscal operations. Although district officials state that the intention of this structure is to free the principals to become instructional leaders, this new administrative layer severely constrains the principals' authority over school functions.

This newly created governance structure at the school level has resulted in conflict between the schools and the central office, primarily in relation to the external partners. Relations between the principal and faculty in School A and the school's first external partner were highly contentious. The external partners first began working with School A during the supervision period. The principal reported that he felt the external partners did not have enough contact with the school and that they were not helping him to improve the school. When the school was placed on probation, the principal talked about identifying students performing almost at national average on the TAP and targeting resources by placing them in classes with reading and math specialists. The principal says that the external partners opposed this strategy. Conflict over who had authority to initiate and implement a plan for improving the school's test scores arose. The external partners contacted the central office and complained that the school principal and faculty were uncooperative; the principal did the same thing. The external partners report that they were locked out of classrooms. The principal eventually "fired" these external partners after 5 months of probation and 7 months of supervision.

Teachers in School A also expressed discontent with the external partners. Several teachers questioned the quality and kind of services the external partners provided the school. Many teachers felt that the faculty survey the partners conducted could have been done by the school. They also report that they did not know why the external partners had entered their classrooms and that the partners did not provide the teachers with any feedback. Teachers complained of "miscommunication" with the external partners.

Although the principal of School B does not report any conflict between himself and the external partners, conflict between the partners and the teachers in School B has arisen. Unlike in School A, however, it remains submerged, manifesting itself in faculty meetings and teachers' informal exchanges. Most teachers in School B say that they have almost no interactions with the external partners. However, teachers express resentment toward the role of the external partners within the classroom. The external partners developed a checklist focused on whether or not teachers used the reading and instructional strategies recommended by the external partners and the school's own Reading Task Force. Teachers complained that the checklist is evaluative rather than supportive. They objected to the external partners exerting authority over their classroom practices.

Probation has also produced conflict between staff members within the schools. Teachers in School B report that school administrators monitor classrooms more closely than they have before. Many teachers report that the administrators are generally positive, but some teachers feel that the administrators, particularly the principal, have unfairly evaluated them. These teachers say that the principal's visit provided an inadequate basis for evaluation. School B teachers feel that the principal has transferred his fear of being fired onto the teachers. Many teachers expressed concern that the administration was monitoring them covertly.

Whereas School B's administrators monitor teachers, School A's administration created probation coordinators to oversee teachers' implementation of the instructional activities the school has adopted to improve test scores. Teachers in School A are required to spend 20 minutes each class period, every day, for silent sustained reading (SSR). Teachers also have to administer weekly vocabulary tests, and English teachers must assign students three essays similar to those found on the IGAP.

Teachers report their progress on SSR to the school's reading coordinator, and they give the tests and essays to the probation coordinators, who examine the students' work and the teachers' comments. The probation coordinators give a sample of these tests to the external reading team, which consists of a parent, an attorney, a college professor, a retired principal, and a teacher on leave, all appointed by the principal. The reading team reports back to the leadership team, the committee appointed by the principal to oversee school improvement efforts. Teachers report that the tests go into their personnel file.

Teachers reacted differently to this monitoring. One teacher followed the directives closely, another teacher refused to implement the SSR activity because he felt he was given insufficient materials, and another teacher hurried through the tests and had students write the practice essays at home. Many teachers feel that the mandated activities impinge on their real curriculum.

Patterns of Policy Accommodation

Conflict between district-level and school-level actors has arisen, but there is also evidence of accommodation. First, the district's probation process uses the SIP as a vehicle for change, largely following the process established by the state school code. Second, the district has reallocated its personnel and resources to reflect the state's accountability focus. Although the new administration eliminated or downsized most departments within the central office, it created the Office of Accountability, which has grown from a staff of 50 in September 1995 to 78 by September 1997 (Chicago Public Schools, 1995, 1996b). Many district units that were initially independent, such as the Office of High School Restructuring, and Curriculum and Instruction, have been placed under the authority of the Office of Accountability.

TABLE 3.2 Patterns of Conflict and Accommodation

Organizational Level	*Conflict*	*Accommodation*
District	Competing visions of school improvement	Allocation of resources and personnel for probation policy
School	Competing authority over instruction and allocation of instructional resources	Allocation of resources for reading instruction and monitoring teachers
Classroom	Competing authority over evaluation of teachers' instructional practices	Implementation of school-mandated reading activities

The schools and teachers have also accommodated to the district policy. The schools have accepted the district's narrow measure of improvement. Both Schools A and B have identified instructional activities and strategies that they feel will raise test scores. A comparison between both schools' SIPs for the 1996-1997 and 1997-1998 school years indicates an increased emphasis on test taking and monitoring since probation. School B's latest SIP stipulates that teachers must use specific instructional strategies associated with improving test scores, and that administrators and external partners will monitor this with classroom observations. School A's latest SIP requires teachers to use SSR and test-taking activities, although it does not prescribe particular instructional strategies. School A administrators will monitor teachers' activities through reports rather than through classroom observations. As mentioned above, most teachers in both schools report that they have followed these directives.

Table 3.2 summarizes the conflicts that have arisen around the district's probation policy and the ways that district and school actors have accommodated to its accountability objectives. Much of the conflict centers on instruction and classroom practices. Officials in the central office promote competing instructional goals. District probation documents reflect disagreements on whether the policy should focus on basic skills and testing or on more complex skills development and instructional improvement. Conflict between school and district actors also focuses on issues of instruction. Teachers resent when external partners exert authority over classroom practices, and at least the principal in School A reports significant conflict with the external partners on how to allocate instructional resources. Finally, probation has

produced tension within the school between administrators and teachers, particularly surrounding the issue of classroom evaluation and monitoring.

Accommodation occurred through the district's allocation of resources within the central office and the alignment of the probation process with the state school code. Within the schools, principals shifted personnel resources to support reading instruction and to monitor teachers. School A created several new positions and teams to oversee teachers' implementation of reading and testing activities. School B put resources into testing materials and into monitoring teachers. Its Reading Task Force makes use of school personnel to direct instructional change, and administrators and external partners evaluate if teachers implement these changes. Finally, most teachers, in both schools, report that they have implemented the mandated activities.

TEACHERS' COPING STRATEGIES

The implementation perspective illuminates the conflicts that arise when policies created at higher levels of school organization attempt to introduce new goals into schools. To understand better how teaching itself influences teachers' reactions to accountability policies such as Chicago's probation policy, we turn now to Lipsky's model.

Although the district's focus on measurable outcomes, such as the TAP scores, narrows probation's objectives, district guidelines also demand that schools adopt long-term strategies for dramatically changing instruction from teacher-centered to student-centered instruction. The district's demands make explicit the conflict Lipsky argues is inherent in teaching—the press for universal standards and achievement versus the demands that teachers deal with their students' individual needs. We found that teachers in both Schools A and B respond to this conflict by adopting coping strategies that restrict the objectives of the policy, personalize its goals, and limit the complex demands of the teaching task.

Both schools require that teachers implement very specific strategies that reduce the objectives of the probation policy from improving instruction and school climate to improving standardized test scores. Both schools require that teachers have students do a considerable amount of practice test taking. School A requires weekly vocabulary tests and sample IGAP essays. In School B, math teachers must have students take practice reading tests every Thursday, whereas English teachers have students use test-preparation workbooks for two whole class periods every week. In addition, the Reading Task Force in School B provides teachers with a monthly reading calendar that identifies the days when teachers in each department must teach specific reading strategies. This type of routinization at the school level allows the

schools to limit the demands of the probation policy and to maximize the use of teachers' time to improve reading test scores.

Teachers in both schools used the probation policy to limit further the demands of teaching. We observed only one teacher in either school providing students feedback on the practice tests. By not discussing the tests, teachers severely limited the instructional usefulness of these activities.

Teachers' limited use of the testing materials reflects the tight control over time and content they maintain in their instructional activities in general. Teachers in the remedial-level English classes in School A taught grammar lessons with a very narrow, basic skills emphasis. Throughout the entire 100 minutes of each class observed, teachers assigned seat work and vocabulary tests. Other teachers in both schools also strictly controlled the time and content of the classes. Discussions were teacher directed and involved students in providing only short answers. In most of the English classes observed in School B, students were primarily involved in answering questions from the textbook or in writing and revising journals. Most math teachers in both schools tended to move through the textbook with little effort to provide varied learning experiences. These teacher-centered practices, in addition to the teachers' superficial use of the school-mandated test-taking practices, essentially limited the demands of teaching by ignoring students' learning needs and restricting student exploration of content and their development of higher order skills.

Although both schools have routinized instruction, teachers also developed personalized goals in areas over which they felt they had some discretion. This was most pronounced among the English teachers. The teachers did use the mandated reading and testing materials, but they also approached literature and writing in highly individual ways. In School A, one English I teacher contained students' interpretation of an assigned play through reducing discussions to recitations. The other English I teacher approached the play by engaging students in lively discussions and class readings. In School B, the English teachers developed dramatically different lessons for those days not taken up by practice testing. One teacher had students read poems from the class textbook and answer questions; the other English teacher had students engage in free writing.

These different approaches stemmed, in part, from the teachers' different notions of the freshman English curriculum. Teachers in School B reported that there was no departmental-level or school-level curriculum for freshman English. In light of this, the teachers essentially developed their own objectives. One teacher stated that the goals of freshman English were "to cover the basic language arts skills. . . . We expose them to literature as a reflection of the time in which the literary piece was written, as well as a means of creative expression." The other freshman-English teacher stated the course

TABLE 3.3 Teachers' Coping Strategies

Strategy	*English Teachers*	*Math Teachers*
Restricting policy objectives	Superficial implementation of reading activities	Superficial implementation of testing activities
Personalization of goals	Separation of reading and literature instruction, individual course goals, fragmented curriculum	Defending text-driven practices
Controlling time and content	Seat work, recitation	Text-driven practices, emphasis on computation

goals as "coverage of different genres, and terms like conflict, plot, character, and setting." The lack of a curriculum resulted in extensive teacher discretion unaffected by probation. In School A, we saw a similar personalization of goals by teachers. One English I teacher said that the goals of the class were to "write a coherent paragraph, give an oral presentation, and to raise scores." The other teacher saw the goals as to "do the gamut" of American literature and added writing paragraphs and improving reading.

Although both schools responded to probation by seeking to routinize instruction and content, the probation policy, with its focus on testing, only exacerbated the fragmentation of the curriculum at the classroom level. Teachers, in both schools, felt that they could not develop coherent instructional units and that they needed to delay real work, such as group research projects and writing about literature, to make time for test-taking activities.

Table 3.3 presents the coping strategies teachers in both Schools A and B adopted to contain the uncertainty produced by the probation policy and inherent in the teaching task. Teachers restricted the policy's objectives by implementing the reading and testing activities mandated by the schools as a means by which to obtain student compliance and maintain control, rather than as learning tools. The teachers further limited the demands inherent in teaching through their use of predominantly teacher-centered practices. Teachers, particularly math teachers, in both schools consistently stated that the student-centered practices advocated by the district assessment teams and the external partners were ineffective with their students. In this way, the teachers defended their routine practices even though the failures of these practices had been exposed.

The teachers implemented the school-mandated activities, but they also maintained some discretion over their classroom practices through personalizing

the goals of the courses they taught and through keeping the mandated activities distinct from their other instruction. This is most pronounced among the English teachers. None of the English teachers observed in either school used the emphasis on reading skills to incorporate the development of these skills into their literature or writing instruction. They saw the practice tests in reading as an interruption of the curriculum rather than as another aspect of it. Lipsky's model suggests that although teachers have accommodated to probation, they still protect their discretion and autonomy.

OUTCOME-BASED ACCOUNTABILITY AND TEACHING

Can Chicago's probation policy, as an outcome-based accountability policy, alter and improve classroom teaching in low-performing high schools? The implementation and street-level bureaucrat models provide some insight into this question. First, we saw that the district, schools, and teachers accommodated to probation and its accountability demands in ways that did change what teachers taught. The district directed its personnel and financial resources toward holding schools accountable, and it provided schools with probation managers and external partners to assist in the creation of improvement plans focused on improving students' reading scores. In response, schools redirected personnel and curricular resources toward teachers' use of test-taking materials in their classrooms. Both schools we studied provided teachers with these materials, mandated their use, and monitored teachers' compliance. Teachers, for the most part, followed these directives. The district's use of standardized reading test scores as the measure of school performance resulted in schools and teachers targeting resources on activities specifically linked to raising test scores, thus effecting what teachers taught.

Conflict surrounding curriculum and instruction, however, also arose and, ultimately, impeded meaningful changes in teaching. Given Chicago's weak fiscal conditions and the strong political influence over programs, we can expect these conflicts to be prolonged. Principals and teachers competed with the district's external partners for authority over the allocation of instructional resources and over classroom practices.

School staff also competed for control over curriculum and instruction. Teachers resented increased monitoring and evaluation by administrators and the intrusion of the school-mandated activities into their "real" curriculum. Although teachers did assign school-mandated activities, they kept strict control over time and content and used probation to further this control rather than to address students' learning needs. Teachers also kept the teaching of reading separate from their "real" curriculum. In these ways, teachers preserved their routine practices.

Our findings suggest that outcome-accountability policies can redirect the allocation of resources across the multiple levels of school organization to produce a superficial change in curriculum and instruction. Schools and teachers, however, respond to a narrow focus on standardized test scores by targeting resources in ways that fragment the curriculum and undermine improvements in teaching. Teachers' routine curricular and instructional practices remain unchanged. Although outcome-accountability policies may expose the failures of these routines, they may have limited potential to address these failures.

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4

The Capability for Enhancing Accountability

RICK GINSBERG and BARNETT BERRY

Since the release of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), accountability has been a major component of reform initiatives in the United States. Despite claims by the educational community that the crisis rhetoric disparaging school performance is overblown (Berliner & Biddle, 1995), media, government, and foundation reports highlighted poor test scores; weak international comparisons in achievement studies; high drop-out rates; and a plethora of other bad news about schools. Enhanced accountability measures became one of the clarion calls for educational reformers who directed the many policy initiatives aimed at forcing schools and districts to improve. As Kirst (1990) noted, 40 states either created or reinforced their educational accountability systems in the 1980s. Interestingly, many of these same reformers pushing for improved accountability placed the onus for poor performance squarely with unwilling or unable practitioners (Clark & Astuto, 1994). This chapter suggests that externally driven demands for greater accountability have yet to prove useful, that internal accountability models tend to rely on organizational capacities that are nonexistent, and that district accountability systems often fail to assemble a "critical mass" of ingredients. From a case study of the barriers to effective accountability in a low-achieving school district, it is suggested that most accountability models are probably incapable of altering local practices. Many of the key determinants appear to be outside the scope of educational policy making alone.

Much of the demand for stricter accountability emerged from agents or agencies external to school systems. Given the plethora of state-initiated reform activities in the 1980s (see, e.g., Timar & Kirp, 1989), along with the general public's concern with school performance (see any of the yearly results in the mid- to late 1980s of the annual Gallup poll on public attitudes

toward education, reported in *Phi Delta Kappan*), these external demands for improved performance in the form of stricter accountability are understandable. Many states turned to previously implemented standardized testing systems as the primary measures of school quality (Salagnik, 1994). Indeed, some states (e.g., South Carolina; see Ginsberg, 1996) set up elaborate systems to reward schools for improved test scores, whereas districts that achieved below some expected level were threatened with statutory takeover by the state.

Opponents of the use of student achievement data identified key concerns with the reliance on such tests. Issues were raised regarding the potential for a narrowing of the curriculum, misdirecting and deprofessionalizing teaching, increasing the pressure to reject hard-to-teach students, and possibly even harming students' cognitive development (Shepard, 1991). Darling-Hammond (1993c) argued that focusing solely on such outcome data ignores the varied conditions under which students learn within and outside of school.

Thus, to such reformers, an effective accountability system needs to increase the likelihood that best practice will occur, to decrease the likelihood of "harmful" practices, and to promote internal means for identifying and altering practices that are ineffective (Darling-Hammond & Ascher, 1992). Given the evidence that racial and ethnic differences in achievement virtually disappear for minority students who have access to comparable curricular opportunities and experienced, qualified teachers (Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 1992; Oakes, 1989), such accountability requirements are especially important for those poor and minority-student-dominated districts that tend to achieve least well.

One approach to reforming accountability has been to adopt a multiple-indicator system, ostensibly moving away from simply relying on student achievement data (see, e.g., Odden, 1990, for a discussion of California's School Report Card). However, even when multiple-indicator systems have been created, the evidence suggests that non-test score data get minimal attention. It appears that in such systems, despite considerable efforts to redesign the ways practitioners collect and examine a range of data, key barriers mitigate against success, such as the lack of time and professional development. In such instances, the new, more expanded varieties of information become virtually useless in reforming practice (Berry & Norton, 1995).

No doubt the theory underlying all of these accountability efforts is that by tying rewards and sanctions to school performance, low performers would improve. However, after a decade of reform, the historically low-performing schools and districts tended to remain as the poorest achievers in their respective districts and states. By the mid-1990s, increased staff development or better alignment of the curriculum and testing still did not make a difference (see Dornan, Jenkins, & Berry, 1995).

Accountability, then, has not served as the panacea that many envisioned. Seen as the "process by which school districts and states [or other constituents, such as parents] attempt to ensure that schools and school systems meet their goals" (Rothmann, 1995, p. 189), Newmann, King, and Rigdon (1997) argued that a complete externally driven accountability system needs four critical components:

> 1. information about the organization's performance (e.g., test scores);
> 2. standards for judging the extent to which an organization is successful;
> 3. significant consequences for failure and rewards for success; and
> 4. an external agent that receives and passes judgement on the organization's performance. (p. 43)

However, as Newmann et al. contend, schools can develop internal processes of accountability as well. Such strong internal accountability systems would include the means for staff to identify standards for student performance, to collect data to measure their progress, and to use peer review to drive goal attainment. In their study of 24 restructuring schools, Newmann et al. found that schools with strong internal accountability tended to be associated with a school's organizational capacity. Although capacity was previously a part of the reform rhetoric (see, e.g., Darling-Hammond, 1993b), Newmann et al. argued that only when the human, technical, and social resources of a school are organized into an effective collective enterprise does organizational capacity become significant.

Thus, previous literature suggests that much of the externally driven demand for accountability has not been terribly effective. However, effective internal accountability requires an organizational capacity that may not be realistically attainable for many schools or districts. What are the prospects for an effective accountability system in a district that does not have the "critical mass" of ingredients; the human, technical, and social resources that Newmann et al. identify? This chapter examines one such district as a means of highlighting the barriers to effective accountability in a low-achieving school district. Drawing on the work of a number of theorists and advocates for equity-based reform and accountability (e.g., Darling-Hammond & Ascher, 1992; Oakes, 1989; Shepard, 1991; Wheelock, 1995), this case underscores the complexity of reforming such districts and suggests that available accountability models are incapable of altering local practices. Indeed, the case suggests that many of the key determinants are probably beyond the scope of educational policy making alone.

THE CASE—SYLVAN SCHOOL DISTRICT 1[1]

Data for the case study were collected through interviews, school and classroom observations, and analysis of available survey information and other documents. Data collection took place in the schools over an intensive 4-month period, with follow-up interviews spanning a 2-year period. A qualitative, thematic strategy of data analysis was used to aggregate data and identify key themes (see Berry, 1996, for more details on the data collection and analysis procedures).

Sylvan School District 1 is a southeastern, rural, "at-risk" district located in a poor state. The state has a per capita income level ranked 38th in the United States. Among American states, it ranks 49th in the percentage of low-birthweight babies, 50th in infant mortality, 47th in child death rates, 48th in births to single teens, and 40th in percentage of children (under 18) who are poor. Just over 40% of the state's public school students qualify for free or reduced-price lunches, with 25% of children living in a home with a single parent. The state serves more than 600,000 students in more than 1,100 schools in 91 school districts (3 have consolidated since data collection). There are almost 39,000 teachers, who have an average of 14 years of experience, with 43% holding a master's degree. The average salary is $29,414. The state spends an average of $4,300 per pupil. In the secondary schools, 24% of teachers teach subjects without even a minor in their field. Politically, the state is legislatively dominated, although two strong governors led educational reform agendas in the 1980s and early 1990s.

The state's education reforms of the 1980s were highly focused. The omnibus education bill passed in 1984 provided a model for other states to follow as highly specified policies and practices were codified into law. The bill covered a range of issues—including new graduation and student testing requirements, school and individual teacher incentive pay plans, principal preparation reform, and teacher professional development.

In terms of teaching policy, the state invested heavily into Madeline Hunter's model for effective teaching in the 1980s. Since 1990, however, there has been little coherent focus on professional development, except for the state's state systemic initiative (SSI) "teacher teaching teacher" program involving 16 regional hubs. The state has developed curriculum frameworks, although little has been done to connect them to teacher standards and ongoing professional development. In addition, the prior focus on Hunter's methods confounds the kinds of expectations expressed in the new student standards, which require more complex types of teaching strategies. The state spends a total of about $3 million a year on professional development, about one eighth the amount spent by a neighboring state that has twice the number of teachers. Recent student test results (National Assessment of Educational

Progress) reflect the problems being faced, as they were among the lowest in the nation, with little progress since 1990.

Sylvan itself has a long history of documented problems and poor student achievement. In fact, the district became so immersed in the state's initiatives for reform in the 1980s that eventually it was labeled as an "impaired school system," receiving significant state oversight and intervention. During the past several years, with changes in state policies and leadership, the district has received more support and less monitoring and castigation.

The district has three schools and serves about 1,300 students, most of whom are African American and poor. Specifically, 98% of students are African American, 96% of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches, and 20% are classified as students who have a disability. The three schools include a primary (pre-K to Grade 3), an elementary (Grades 4-6), and a high school (Grades 7-12). There is a superintendent and several assistants whose titles and duties have changed considerably during the recent decade of reform. The board of education has hired and fired four superintendents in 10 years. The district employs about 80 teachers and 27 teaching assistants. About half live in the community. Teacher turnover has been a significant problem with the three schools, often facing a yearly 25% turnover rate.

The district is one of about 200 schools that the State Department of Education (SDE) is currently working to improve by teaching teachers how to teach through demonstration lessons and modeling. For a few years, the SDE also assisted the district's high school in becoming a member of the state's Re Learning network—an initiative based on the innovative ideas of the Coalition of Essential Schools (CES). Unfortunately, this effort fell apart for both political and pedagogical reasons.

The Sylvan community reflects many of the features and conditions of poor areas across the Southeast—except that its conditions are probably worse than most. In a state whose per capita income is only 79% of the nation's average, Sylvan's per capita income is $5,000 below the state average. Poverty levels are high (more than 29% of the county's population is below the poverty line), whereas education levels are low (20% of the population has less than a ninth-grade education, and 25% have not earned a high school diploma). In addition, 36% of the families are headed by a single parent, and more than 44% of all births are to unwed mothers. Health concerns are reflected in the fact that it was only recently that the district could afford a full-time nurse.

The county in which Sylvan resides has three school districts, with Sylvan serving the poorest of the county's children. Each district has its own administrative structure and varying tax base to support its schools. The comparative poverty of Sylvan is reflected in the fact that the value of one mill in

Sylvan I ($12,000) is about one half of the value of a mill in the neighboring districts. Similarly, the average teacher's salary is $3,000 below the state average and about $2,000 below the average in adjacent systems. The district operates on approximately a $5 million budget, with an average expenditure of $4,100 per pupil, slightly less than the state's median. A few years ago, a controversial $11.5 million bond referendum was passed that provided support for the construction of a new high school to replace an old structure with no air conditioning, broken windows, a porous roof, and peeling paint.

Student performance is a critical concern for this district. For example, when the district was examined in 1992 to consider how well it met the SDE's 33 quality assessment standards that were related to basic skills achievement on standardized tests, Sylvan did not meet 10 of these standards. This poor performance is highlighted by the fact that the majority of fourth graders (81%) scored below the 50th percentile on a nationally normed basic skills test. Similarly, only 31% of eighth graders met the standards on the state's criterion-referenced testing program. The district was thus recognized as qualifying for "highest priority" technical assistance, the newer version of the state program that previously had it labeled as an "impaired" district. This program offers an array of services that resulted in one recent year of providing 40 days of consulting time to lead workshops and demonstration lessons in areas such as whole language instruction and the writing process.

Thus, Sylvan is a poor, underfunded rural district with a great number of African American students whose performance does not meet state expectations. The state has intervened to provide support to try to improve student performance. However, an analysis of the situation in Sylvan results in the recognition of significant interrelated underlying conditions that influence any attempts at affecting the district, and ultimately, any hope for implementing an accountability system with any potential for success. These underlying conditions represent the circumstances facing educators who attempt to alter the depressing educational situation in place. They are categorized into five themes—racial discord, the power of poverty, the leadership mess, missing ingredients, and unidentified urgency. Taken together, these themes describe a scenario that nullifies the potential for any accountability system, be it externally or internally driven, to have a serious influence on teaching and learning.

We see these five themes as representing a mix of interrelated micro (district only—the leadership mess, missing ingredients, and unidentified urgency) and macro (Sylvan community—racial discord and the power of poverty) factors affecting any efforts at reform. Together, these themes constitute a dysfunctional educational culture that is incompatible with school reform and any effective accountability that could meaningfully enhance schooling. This notion of educational culture can be seen as a form of "cultural capital"

(Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) relating to education. In Bourdieu and Passeron's conception of cultural capital, aspects of culture are resources that are valued differently. We believe that when the cultural capital relating to education is in a dysfunctional state, then reform must address all the micro and macro variables in tandem, because altering any of these in isolation will not be powerful enough to affect the dysfunctional culture that is present.

Racial Discord

Many small communities in the South still suffer with the vestiges of poor race relations from the forced segregation era. Entrenched groups have struggled to give up power or have found avenues for maintaining their positions of prominence (see, e.g., Orfield, 1996, for a recent discussion of post-*Brown v. Board of Education* racial politics). Race relations in the Sylvan community are a significant area of contention. As one community leader described it, "The system is congested with racial discord that feeds on itself." Another was even more direct, suggesting that the district's inadequate resources and poor performance on state tests were a "direct result of racism." This sense of the impact of racism on Sylvan's schools was echoed by a longtime observer of the state education system, who emphasized the continuing racial differences in Sylvan:

> The community is starkly split along racial and socioeconomic lines, with the white power structure being reticent about providing quality education for black children. They see no need to educate black citizens, who they feel should remain ignorant and submissive.

Such powerful racial overtones are substantiated by the schooling and housing patterns in the larger community that contains the Sylvan school district. The phenomenon of "white flight" to surrounding areas has been commonplace. Both private schools and surrounding school districts have served as safe havens for many of Sylvan's White students and parents. Indeed, Whites still sit in most of the positions of power in the community, except for service on the board of education. Thus, whereas Black political participation has evolved in the governance of the schools, Whites still control the city council, the mayor's office, the sheriff's office, along with the key leadership positions in the local bank and manufacturing plant. One local leader explained that the White power structure does not identify with the public schools at all, "since none of its members attended [Sylvan] schools." Thus, despite the success of the recent bond referendum, many described current support from the White community as very weak, what one resident described as "still not enough to lift bricks." And many Whites complain about the Blacks and the shift of resources to support their schools. A state

official told us, "Many Whites complain that they are paying for Black schools that they won't take care of." Such sentiments parallel the description of southern politics generations earlier in the New Deal era, as the White power structures resisted any outside efforts to provide anything but narrow support while maintaining local prerogatives to say who should get support (Piven & Cloward, 1971).

What is the impact of this racial discord? Certainly, any efforts at consensus building, any thrusts by educational reformers to build collaborative models for change, are drastically hampered. A former superintendent, a White man with a history of success in implementing school reform, could not build the trust among Whites or Blacks needed for a change agenda, and he resigned. An SDE official explained that local constituents would make efforts to change too fast very difficult, suggesting that the superintendent's life would be made "miserable." And both teachers and students are also affected by the racial strife. Teachers appeared very intimidated by the local power structure. The most common response to questions about the board's role in change was complete silence. Teachers were reluctant to talk about the role of business, local government, or even the school board in effecting change. At the same time, students seemed very angry and distrustful of adults. Perhaps, then, it is no surprise that results on state tests are so poor and change initiatives are so difficult to implement. Both teachers and students do not trust the system.

The Power of Poverty

Racial problems are not the only significant ones affecting schools. Poverty is a central issue in the community. It surfaces as a major constraint for effective school reform initiatives. One local teacher described the situation for the children in very passionate terms:

> They come from homes with no books and no cars. We have 5-year-old children who must get on the school bus at 6:00 a.m. and not get home until after 4:00 p.m. . . . Thank goodness we provide a breakfast. [And, then] all the single parents who cannot help with the simplest homework assignment.

Such descriptions of the fiscal circumstances affecting the students in Sylvan certainly mirror much of what Kozol (1991) described in his analyses of schools in East St. Louis, Chicago, New York, and Washington, DC. Thus, although Sylvan students do have access to schooling, the poor conditions reflect what Wise (1967) explained as the difference between the quantitative access to 12 years of school and the qualitative educational experience that is made available.

The power of poverty, however, goes far deeper than just the obvious financial ramifications and severe lack of educational expertise or training for parents. Poverty, as Havighurst (1966) described it more than 30 years ago, is "pathological." Along with poverty, he wrote, go social ills like "unemployment, crime, juvenile delinquency, bad housing, broken families, and residential segregation" (p. 72). In discussing poverty, political scientist James Q. Wilson (1965) cited the concerns related to families who for generations provided no support for education, for intellectual attainment, for ambition. Instead, there is only reinforcement for what he describes as the "tragic pattern of the past." In his terms, the real issue of poverty is culture, a vicious cycle of conditions that promote a lack of a sense of opportunity and purpose. We acknowledge the criticisms of such "culture of poverty" arguments (see, e.g., Erickson, 1987; Ryan, 1976), which stressed that such blaming of the "victims" moved the focus away from the significant systemic issues as the root cause of problems. No matter how the impact of poverty is conceptualized, its pervasiveness was so powerful that it affected nearly every activity in the district.

We found this ubiquitous poverty as forming a powerful cultural set of norms prevalent in Sylvan. As one community leader described this belief, "I ain't got so much, so what I got I am going to keep!" Another described it as follows: "This [culture] requires underachievement . . . challenging it will jeopardize the personal gains many have made over the years—gains that have been the result of maintaining the status quo." In such a setting, promoting any far-reaching educational innovations is very difficult. Not only do school officials expend enormous energy, in their words, "scrounging for dollars," but the time or inclination to reflect and consider risk-taking or vision-building ideas are lacking. The culture and conservative proclivities are so potent that one state official explained that the district has "continuously hired individuals who would not rock the boat."

The impact on the education scene in Sylvan is predictable. Although reform is difficult in most any school setting, the odds against significant change in Sylvan are incredible. The present superintendent, who came without the history of reform that his predecessor possessed, sees accountability as a process of "documenting what [my] principals are doing." Professional development involves making certain that teachers "know how to use Windows and Q&A." Although this superintendent is meeting with teachers in monthly forums, many of his ideas reflect what Yukl (1994) described as management and not leadership. Thus, the culture breeds maintaining the status quo. One consultant described the situation to us this way:

> In some respects, many teachers are 50 years behind the times. There is a lot of good will and most teachers want to do what is best for the kids, but

> it is difficult for them to imagine what it would be like to really educate these students. They cannot have high expectations for students when they do not have high expectations for themselves . . . these teachers have been browbeaten for a long time.

In fact, teachers' descriptions of their work environment reflected a sense of status as second-class citizens. For example, they still must sign in each morning in the main office. A new high school principal was brought in, we were told, "to shape some teachers up," because of the sense of teachers' preparing poor lesson plans and having weak classroom management skills. He lasted 1 year and has since been replaced twice! Before the present superintendent was brought in, teachers explained that there were few opportunities to meaningfully express their professional opinions. Some high school teachers said that they get "blasted all the time," and others lamented that "absolutely nothing is done to show appreciation for [them]." This culture has to have an impact on the teachers, the result aptly described by an outside consultant: "I have been in other schools where the teachers' vocabulary was filled with words expressing engagement with their teaching and their own self-esteem . . . you do not hear such words in this district."

It appears that the power of poverty has been building for decades. Teachers do not seem terribly motivated or enthusiastic about education and its potential. And the added burden of the high turnover rate of professional personnel makes envisioning significant reform very difficult.

The Leadership Mess

We have already mentioned several of the problems associated with the leadership in Sylvan. Superintendents have a difficult time moving the district ahead, and there is a high turnover rate among the superintendent and principal positions. The school board does not seem very supportive of the professional staff, which exasperates a feeling of mistrust among the employees. Finding adequate resources is such a major obstacle that we discovered that more than 75% of a major 4-hour meeting of the superintendent and key staff revolved around resource-related issues, like bus repair for a field trip. So much time is spent with addressing the resource scarcity that little time remains for the kind of efforts normally associated with school improvement.

However, the leadership mess is more extensive than this. The school board tries to micromanage all aspects of the educational program, and the mistrust engendered is remarkable. Any of the prevalent notions about site-based management or teacher autonomy seem very distant in Sylvan. The school board members, many very new to positions of power, are constantly trying to control the schools. The board members take a very bureaucratic, factory-like approach to running the schools, treating principals like foremen

and teachers like hired help. As one teacher explained, "The board sees a problem [like discipline in a class] and they want the superintendent to go jump on the principal, who then is supposed to jump on the teacher." This situation has led the superintendent to try to co-opt the board, as he works to control them so they will leave him alone. He noted, "I now write them memos and publish a newsletter so I won't have to take all their phone calls and respond to all their questions about everything I do."

The leadership mess, then, is the result of resource scarcity and significant tension among the key leaders in the district, resulting in a severe lack of open communication. It is obvious, as one teacher told us, "that we are not united here." The communication problems may be the result of having more than half of the teachers living outside the community, but it was depressing to us when a high school teacher in this small community could not tell us where the only elementary school was located. Faculty associated the communication problems also with the large number of cliques that formed after a middle school was closed and some jobs were lost. Whatever the specific causes of the communication breakdowns in Sylvan are, it is clear that teachers do not openly share information or ideas with one another. One teacher commented, "It has been so difficult to be critical of what goes on around here . . . if you do, you will be chastised, isolated, and you will not get what you need."

When raising questions is so severely criticized, the result has to be a dysfunctional system. One teacher explained that "none of us are willing to go through the 'crap' one has to go through in order to take the lead on an issue." We see this situation as a failing of the district's leadership in a setting where strong leadership is needed for any chance for the schools to change their ways.

Missing Ingredients

Clearly, good teachers are important to the success of any school or school district. The teacher interviews and documentation we reviewed suggested that Sylvan had many teachers interested in succeeding. It appears, however, that the leadership problems and tensions already described have had a deadening effect on teaching in the district. Certainly, attracting teachers is a problem for any rural community, with the lack of community resources like a movie theater, good restaurants, and similar amenities. When added to the relatively low salaries in Sylvan, the problems facing the personnel director are obvious. But the human capital constraints in Sylvan are deeper than the obvious. Like any good recipe, a variety of ingredients are needed to mix together to make a good meal. In Sylvan, however, some key ingredients for successful reform are clearly lacking. The necessary support from outside agencies and professional networks for building a critical mass of expertise is severely weak in Sylvan.

The SDE has been active in the district, and new directions promised under the guise of technical support may help to some degree. But the kinds of often well-meaning consultation the district has experienced are not the type that enhances human capital. Teachers told us that SDE officials arrive in Sylvan with the posture, "I know what you need, but this is what we are offering." Indeed, one outside consultant with 10 years of experience interacting in Sylvan expressed a commonly held negative view of the teachers:

> The district has a real problem when it comes to teachers. There are teachers who are from the community but just do not have the teaching skills. Then, there are the teachers from outside the community, most of whom are White, who just refuse to believe that Black children can learn.

These internal and external beliefs about the teachers and the kind of support they receive are affected by three related factors we label as ingredients for successful change efforts. Sylvan teachers are wary of outside support, there is no local university or postsecondary support for the district, and there are minimal associations with the professional networks that traditionally support reform activity.

First, Sylvan teachers have been so inundated with state-level support for so many years that they have learned to dismiss it. There has been what was described as a "constant stream of different contact people." One teacher told us that despite all the consultations, "they still do not know how to teach these students any better." Another said that they "still do not know what to expect" from the SDE. Many teachers see the SDE assistance as just another means for implementing state rules and procedures. They see the state consultants as outside evaluators who judge them but who do not really understand their needs. As one teacher explained,

> The department's representatives have become so specialized that no one can seem to get to know us very well. Those who are assigned to work with us lack the big picture, and the services we receive are not very well integrated.

Second, the isolation from a university or teaching college limits the access to the varying people and resources common in other districts. Unbelievably, the district has had only one student teacher in the past 5 years. A teacher told us: "We have not had a student teacher in a long time. However, we almost did last year. One of our graduates wanted to return to do her student teaching in the district, but her college would not let her." Teachers told us that they "never see a professor," and nobody seemed able to identify any of the state's deans of education. The idea of the highly touted profes-

sional development school partnership between a school and a university was completely foreign (see, e.g., Darling-Hammond, 1993a).

Finally, the district was not connected to many of the significant professional associations or networks that so often support reform activities. The recent association with Re:Learning was a departure from that norm, although it, too, was discontinued because of political pressure and lack of any coherent professional development strategy from the state. Research by Talbert and McLaughlin (1993) has highlighted the significance of professional and university associations in developing teachers' capacities for innovative teaching. Obviously, Sylvan has not experienced those kinds of supportive mechanisms. And, to successfully change, a district like Sylvan vitally needs consistent, trusted, and high-quality outside support and assistance.

Unidentified Urgency

Given the previously described underlying conditions, it is understandable why change has been so difficult for Sylvan. We are not even certain that we agree with the sentiment of the previous superintendent, who told us that "the teachers are just beginning to understand how profoundly they will have to change." Much evidence suggests that a stubborn persistence lingers in the district that hampers change efforts and works toward continuity of practice. There clearly is no sense of any urgency to change. For example, only a slight majority of staff supported the CES Re:Learning initiative. Later, a survey administered statewide to all participants in CES activities found considerable ambiguity among Sylvan teachers. Of all the schools across the state involved in the survey, Sylvan had the lowest percentage of teachers with "knowledge of the project." The survey also found problematic conditions and prospects, including large classes and lack of a common planning time. Furthermore, Sylvan teachers reported that these conditions would continue to be the norm. In addition, teachers reported that there was very little mutual respect among teachers, administrators, and students, and that they were skeptical about whether Re:Learning could be successfully implemented. In fact, only 29% indicated they were disappointed with that prospect.

Our classroom observations underscore this lack of any sense of urgency, what one consultant described as teachers "hav[ing] not been encouraged and provided opportunities to know more" about teaching and learning. The best example we found was an English teacher who had no clue about how to deal with children who could not read. She argued that "many just don't like to read" or are just "slow readers." When quizzed about how to deal with these issues, we were told that she "just gives them extra time." There was no sense of pedagogical theory, of a framework for change, of any of the resources that may help such a situation. Even for teachers who might be more interested or ready for professional development, the resources were unavailable

or inappropriate. Or, as a district consultant told us, "we have been working here for some time now and we tend to sing the blues . . . it seems hopeless at times."

The CES program offered a variety of new learning opportunities for Sylvan teachers in the year it was supported. They attended statewide seminars, visited other schools, and worked with national faculty. Yet until last year, the district's total budget for professional development was $5,000—a rousing $60 per teacher! And sadly, because of pressure from the religious Right and the lack of any thoughtful statewide plan for teacher professional development, the state superintendent of education pulled the state-level support for the CES effort. Thus, Sylvan may be back to the good old days of $60 per teacher for professional development activities. Obviously, the district has not supported professional development, highlighting what we see as a lack of a sense of urgency.

Perhaps even more alarming is the requirement teachers face to complete basic skills checklists for all students. Teachers are prompted to pursue ambitious learning outcomes, but the basic skills mentality still dominates the Sylvan scene. Given the statewide testing program that also emphasizes basic skills, this approach may be understandable. But it certainly does not support ideas related to changing practice. Sylvan does not have to "get back to the basics" because its whole approach is terribly basic. Sylvan educators commiserate over the pressure from both real and perceived state mandates that focus primarily on raising the standardized tests. Such barriers require a new generation of thoughtful policies, encompassing what Darling-Hammond (1993b) described as "developing the capacity of schools and teachers to be responsible for student learning and responsive to student and community needs, interests and concerns" (p. 754). Nevertheless, the district and the teachers who work there do not display any great sense of the need for dramatic change. As one longtime observer of the district concluded, "the problems identified in 1995 are virtually the same as the problems in 1983."

CONCLUSIONS

Sylvan is a school district with many needs. The community in which the schools reside has significant problems that affect the schools. The underlying conditions we identified—racial discord, the power of poverty, the leadership mess, missing ingredients, and unidentified urgency—describe major school district and community-based obstacles impeding educational improvement. As a single case study, one may legitimately question if Sylvan is an outlier, in that its circumstances do not necessarily represent many other settings. Although we do not know how different Sylvan is in all respects from other districts, we do know that many of the underlying conditions

facing Sylvan reflect issues elsewhere. Thus, the impact of the conditions affecting school districts like Sylvan must be addressed to understand issues related to accountability.

Given the data in the case study, it is clear that external accountability imposed by the state has not been effective. The state testing system remains intact, and little improvement in test scores has emerged. Even with the onerous label of being "impaired" (along with all the state services that implied) or the kinder and gentler label of "highest priority for technical assistance" (along with all the state assistance that implied), Sylvan remained a poorly performing district. Although the state (external) accountability system in which Sylvan is embedded appeared to contain all the characteristics that Newmann et al. (1997) identified as critical, their conclusion about schools with strong external accountability having low organizational capacity is certainly the case for the Sylvan schools. Also, their findings about the importance of organizational capacity for effective internal accountability systems raise important questions for addressing the development of strengthening accountability. However, given that their analysis was of innovative schools they labeled as "restructuring," there is a need to understand accountability-related issues in a broader spectrum of schools.

This study examined such a set of schools, where none of the schools could readily be identified as restructuring, considering the characteristics identified by Newmann et al. (1997, p. 49). What is clear from the analysis of the Sylvan district is that the idea of organizational capacity identified by Newmann et al. is too narrow. Although they provided a more inclusive definition of the term from previous discussions of capacity, moving beyond individual organizational capacity factors to the "degree to which the human, technical, and social resources of an organization are organized into an effective collective enterprise" (p. 47), the definition still ignores key issues derived in the Sylvan analysis. Any notion of organizational capacity cannot consider schools in a vacuum. Indeed, we suggest that organizational capacity as defined is inappropriate, because contextual or environmental issues like community socioeconomic status, poverty levels, racial relations, local politics, and the degree of outside support are as important as any internal organizational capacity factor. Therefore, we label this more inclusive notion as "general capabilities" of a school or school district, and we include factors beyond the control of a school or school district as key considerations for understanding the effectiveness of any accountability system.

We certainly agree that significant professional development issues must be addressed in a school district like Sylvan. However, as Berry (1996) recognized, professional development must consider what he labeled as the new "three R's"—relationships, resources, and racism. Development to support improved accountability of such issues requires a political approach encompassing

the entire community, not just the organizational capacity factors previously delineated. As Darling-Hammond (1993b) has recognized, political development for the 21st century regarding school reform involves "the ways in which groups of people develop shared goals and understandings—a broad consensus about the kind of education they want for children" (p. 760). Such political development captures the needs in Sylvan as identified in the case study. Racial discord, poverty, poor school and community leadership, the need for outside support, and extensive reform measures entail a "big picture" approach to the community, not just sending in waves of educational consultants to fix what is wrong. One community leader in Sylvan, commenting on the past, highlighted how difficult this task will be: "No one wanted to get too close to the situation and help . . . at best, outsiders were willing to give resources to those caught in the web but would not try to really untangle the web." The kind of effort we envision requires a full-blown community effort, with buy-in and participation from an array of community officials, to begin to address the needs for change.

Is this possible? Can accountability be successfully implemented in a district like Sylvan where it supports and produces educational change? In a district like Sylvan, this would require confronting both the White and Black power structures who can influence local policies and even the state legislative delegation. Berry (1996) called for a form of community "therapy" to address these kinds of needs. Add to the dilemma the problems associated with addressing educational concerns of equity and excellence in designing accountability programs (Green, 1983), and the enormity of the task is complicated even further. We are reminded of the major theme in Perkinson's (1968) *The Imperfect Panacea*, a historical analysis that found that education was continually seen as the great savior of American society for an array of societal ills (e.g., race relations, integrating immigrants into American culture, etc.), although the schools alone were always incapable of healing these maladies. Similarly, schools alone cannot formulate reform initiatives or accountability systems that address the complex issues presented in a community like Sylvan. Our sense is that the organizational capacity for implementing an effective accountability system will require an expanded form of a "collective enterprise" that Newman et al. cited. Our notion of a collective enterprise would include community members outside the realm of the educational setting itself. The needs for success are intimidating, and given the nature of the problems described in Sylvan, the challenges are significant.

What are the prospects for school districts and communities with a dysfunctional educational culture like Sylvan, with a mix of micro and macro variables impeding educational growth and change? Improving the educational cultural capital of a district and community will require a wholesale reconsideration by those involved of what they consider important and what

they want from their schools. For example, research on vocationally successful adults with learning disabilities suggests that these individuals went through a personal reframing of their disability, a set of personal decisions related to reinterpreting the learning disability experience from something dysfunctional to something functional (Ginsberg, Gerber, & Reiff, 1994). Similarly, communities like Sylvan may need to collectively examine their underlying beliefs and behaviors affecting the educational system and somehow reframe their feelings to begin addressing the issues identified in this study. For the adults with a learning disability, this reframing involved recognizing the disability, accepting it, learning about it and understanding it, then taking action. A process such as this may be necessary in order for districts like Sylvan to begin to address the dysfunctional nature of their culture. The prospects for success are daunting.

NOTE

1. A more detailed version of the case study appears in Berry (1996).

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5

Politics of Accountability Within a School-to-Career Initiative

Implementation, Representation, and Evaluation

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The School-to-Work Opportunities Act (STWOA) of 1994, Public Law 103-239, was passed by the Clinton administration to establish a national framework for states to create what are called "school-to-work systems." The philosophical framework of the STWOA is reflected in the following purpose statement taken from the National School-to-Work homepage:

> The Act encourages educational and career opportunities for all students by creating a framework for business and educational partnerships at the state and local levels. These partnerships help students make the vital connection between what they learn in school and in the workplace and prepare them for good careers and advanced education and training. (http://www.stw.ed.gov)

School-to-work systems are directly concerned with preparing students for the difficult transitions from school to employment, or from school to 2-year or 4-year postsecondary preparation programs. Researchers and policy analysts refer to school-to-work transitions as ways of easing the passage of young adults from students to wage earners. According to de Lone (1992),

> School-to-work transition refers both to individual journeys and to institutional processes. For individuals, it describes the gradual development

> of the maturity and the academic and occupational skills required to move from the status of student to that of solidly employed worker. It also describes the programs, services and avenues available through education, training, the workplace and the labor market itself, which together provide the preparation, training, experiences and opportunities available to youth as they attempt the transition. (p. 223)

The STWOA assumes that linkages are essential between school reform and efforts to revitalize the nation's economic competitiveness worldwide. Behind this economic argument is a growing body of literature citing entry-level workers' lack of, and need for, basic skills and job preparation (Murnane & Levy, 1993; Rosenbaum & Binder, 1997). Although the extent to which schools have failed to prepare young people is subject to debate (Berliner & Biddle, 1997; Danzig & Vandegrift, 1995), lack of adequate preparation is part of the rationale behind the school-to-work effort. Many assert that public education should accept as a primary responsibility the vocational preparation of young people, including training in employability skills (e.g., how to get and keep a job) and specific occupational skills (Committee for Economic Development, 1985; Ganzglass, 1992). School reform and economic development initiatives thus form the fundamental context for school-to-work policy, and the background for the research reported here.

The STWOA has set into motion the most significant reform agenda for local vocational education programs in three decades. This legislation does so by providing direct model demonstration grants from the National School-to-Work Office to local community partnerships and by providing for large-scale, competitive grants to states that are willing to restructure vocational education around school-to-work-system frameworks. These frameworks align with other educational reform movements while preparing all youths for high-skilled jobs in the workforce, and they simultaneously strengthen partnerships between schools and business and industry. States receive planning and implementation grants to establish their school-to-work systems; they are encouraged to build on existing programs and practices such as tech-prep and the integration of academic and vocational education.

Unlike many new legislatively driven initiatives within the federal government, state implementation grant making associated with the STWOA began very quickly. By July 1, 1994, almost all states and territories had received development (planning) grants, and by October 1, 1994, the first cohort of state implementation grants had been awarded to eight states by joint review teams from the U.S. Departments of Education and Labor. By December 1, 1994, the National School-to-Work Office had been established and the director hired. By midspring, a full staff of individuals, released from

the two sponsoring federal departments, had been assigned to the national office.

An additional 19 states were awarded implementation grants on October 1, 1995 (Colorado was one of those 19 states), and 12 more were funded in October 1996. It is likely that most, if not all, remaining states and territories will receive funding in late 1997, because the federal budget for fiscal year 1998 includes significant dollars for more state implementation grants.

One goal of the federal legislation is to build a school-to-work system out of what has been more of a patchwork of programs across the nation (Charner & Fraser, 1994). To further this goal, state and local grant recipients are required to implement certain core components, including (a) school-based learning activities (e.g., tech-prep, integration of academic and applied learning, career pathways, and career academies); (b) work-based learning activities (e.g., cooperative work experience, youth apprenticeships, job shadowing, internships, service learning, and school-based enterprises); and (c) connecting activities (e.g., matching students' interests and abilities with the work-based learning opportunities, providing a schoolsite mentor to act as a liaison between the student and other key players in school-based and work-based learning; Kopp & Kazis, 1995; Pauly, Kopp, & Haimson, 1995; Stern, Finkelstein, Stone, Latting, & Dornsife, 1995).

HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF COLORADO'S SCHOOL-TO-WORK INITIATIVE

The Colorado Governor's Office received a STWOA development grant in the summer of 1994. During the first months of this grant, a state steering committee was formed, and statewide public meetings were held to solicit a wide range of public input. The actual writing of the state application began in early 1995. In August 1995, Colorado received word that its application had been positively reviewed. A favorable site review resulted in Colorado's receipt of a 5-year, $24 million grant starting October 1, 1995 (Colorado's School-to-Work Initiative, 1995).

Colorado's School-to-Career Activities in Years 1 and 2

Mitchell, Boyd, Cooper, Malen, and Marshall (1994) identified stages in the workflow process by which public policy is developed and implemented. Just as a manufacturing process requires certain raw materials that are gradually shaped into final products over time, policymakers start with demands, resources, information, constituencies, and interest and shape them into final products (administrative teams, procedures and regulations, school programs, etc.). In Colorado, the school-to-work initiative was initially located in the Lieutenant Governor's Office rather than the offices of a state agency.

The lieutenant governor moved quickly to appoint a director of the Colorado School-to-Work Partnership (known as School-to-Career, or STC, in Colorado). An Interagency Team (I Team) was formed to carry out the activities of the state's grant. Within the first year, members of the Interagency Team were appointed from the Colorado Department of Education, Governor's Job Training Office, Colorado Commission on Higher Education, Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, and Colorado Community College and Occupational Education System. Colorado State University was subcontracted to provide technical assistance on evaluation to local partnerships.

Procedures were also established to fund local partnerships. Colorado's original funded application contained seven local partnership applications as examples of the types of partnerships that would be funded. Ultimately, these seven original partnerships completed more extensive proposals in response to a formal request for proposals. They were awarded monies in January 1996 at a public meeting with the lieutenant governor.

The I Team conducted a second round of funding in January 1996. Requests for proposal (RFPs) were sent to every school district, to chambers of commerce, to nonprofit agencies, and to businesses and industries around Colorado. Proposals received in response to these RFPs were reviewed and money awarded to 31 additional partnerships, bringing the total to 38 partnerships funded during Year 1 of the grant.

With second-year funding approved, the I Team sent out a third round of RFPs in August 1996, to fund new partnerships in Year 2 of the grant. In December 1996, the state funded 26 new partnerships, making a total of 64. The second year of funding allowed partnerships to choose from among three levels of funding: development, transition, or implementation. In addition, Year 1-funded partnerships were allowed to renegotiate their status into these levels as well. Funding caps were established at each level of participation and by the size of the participating school district.

At the time of this writing, Colorado has 64 funded partnerships representing all levels of funding and all sizes of districts. About two thirds of the partnerships in Colorado are in areas with small numbers of students (44 partnerships represent school districts that have under 5,000 K-12 students). Level, number, and total funding for all the current partnerships are found in Tables 5.1 and 5.2.

One way to view STC in Colorado is to emphasize the importance of a strategically placed person who can provide unity and commitment to the activities of officials pushing for innovative policies and programs, what Mazzoni (1991) terms an *idea champion*. Idea champions work behind the scenes to twist arms, to call in political IOUs [I owe you], and so on while working to deepen and extend commitment to reform and change. In Colorado, a significant decision was to provide opportunities for as many school districts as possible

TABLE 5.1 Level, Number, and Total Funding of Partnerships

Level of Partnership	*Number of Partnerships*	*Total Funding in Dollars*
Development	19	446,150
Transition	28	1,420,679
Implementation	17	1,421,574

TABLE 5.2 Number of Partnerships, by Size

Size of Partnership	*Number of Partnerships*
0-2,000 students	30
2,000-5,000 students	14
5,000-15,000 students	7
15,000-30,000 students	9
30,000-50,000 students	1
50,000-90,000 students	3

to form partnerships, large and small, urban and rural, developmental, transition, and implementation. Although it is tempting to consider the lieutenant governor as an idea champion, this view can be balanced by the political reality in which STC presents an opportunity to visit local constituents, to award program funding, and to promote an educational reform agenda.

LOCAL CONTEXTS

The descriptions of local contexts in Colorado illustrate some of the key issues that affect partnerships and school districts everywhere as they attempt systemic educational reform around the STC initiative. In searching for an explanatory framework to view accountability, it is possible to expand the political viewpoint. This expansion would examine some of the unstated, self-serving, and self-protectionist considerations that shape STC and accountability policy. What this approach fails to capture are the ways in which individuals rationalize and justify best practices, in language that is altruistic, child-friendly, and community oriented. The examples that follow better support what Macpherson (1996) terms "touchstone policy." Touchstone is a metaphor taken from mining and implies finding the common ground and the epistemic standards intrinsic to the common ground (p. 191). Touchstone implies that one look at the ways in which people come to agree as to what is important in the development of local partnerships, and the technical cri-

teria for evaluation and accountability. Touchstone also hints at a moral imperative to leadership through the value placed on cooperation, consensus building, and inclusiveness.

Although each partnership has a unique story, touchstone offers a framework for understanding some of the interactions between participants. This discussion describes three settings in which politics and accountability interact. These settings are not meant to imply stages but simply places where people come together to define and operationalize STC. The three sections that comprise this framework are the following:

1. Politics of implementation. This section examines how partnerships obtain support from stakeholders and balance stakeholder needs. It also considers the time required to support local initiatives.
2. Politics of representation. This section looks at how representation of key constituents on the state management team affects local partnerships' decisions concerning what work should be accomplished and who must change to accomplish it.
3. Politics of evaluation. This section reports challenges faced by our evaluation team, in reaching within-group consensus, and consensus with the state and local partnerships, about what constitutes effective evaluation practices.

Politics of Implementation

This section reviews some of the dilemmas faced by all partnerships in balancing the interests of constituents. Several viewpoints from educators, students, employers, and parents are discussed.

Balancing STC with other school reform efforts. One large urban partnership expressed the view that STC should be the backdrop for more general curricular reform. In discussing her partnership, this STC director commented,

> School-to-Career is a lot larger than what I expected. With the Chamber coming in as a full-time partner, this really changed our focus . . . making sure that we addressed all of those students at all levels makes it bigger than what my initial picture would have been. (Interview with STC director in a large urban implementation site)

Other educators viewed the newly revised Colorado academic content standards as the major source of state educational reform and STC as subordinate to a more general movement to standards-based efforts within their districts.

Separating STC from other educational reform initiatives invites specific targeting of extra attention and resources. However, it also risks isolating STC as a stand-alone program and not a systemic response.

Balancing developmental needs of students with workplace needs of employers. Business people argue that schools are not particularly friendly places for students headed to work. They criticize schools for placing greater value on the college preparatory experience and on the people who engage in white-collar "professional" work. Educators argue that employers must expose students to all aspects of the industry and provide more jobs above entry level. Employers' needs for entry-level workers are balanced with students' desires for marketable skills and higher wages.

In one partnership, a meat packing plant's need for entry-level workers on the "kill floor" precluded other work-based opportunities in the accounting, marketing, safety, health, and transportation units. Other locations for learning were unavailable for STC students in this partnership. In another rural community partnership, the high school had a long-standing work-school-release program for its seniors, which allowed them to work in a family business or on the family ranch. The STC director expressed concern that there were no work-based skills being taught and that the students served mainly as inexpensive help. Thus, a balance between businesses and schools had to be negotiated for STC to remain a successful part of this rural community's school programs. In a third rural partnership, STC dollars were seen more as additional funding for an already existing tech-prep program rather than a way to build new capacity. Successful implementation required the STC partnership to bridge differences between the desire for "no strings attached" money and the state's monitoring requirements.

Obtaining and strengthening stakeholders support. The level of administrative support within the local school districts differed among the various partnerships. Some school districts had the direct support of a key district administrator (the superintendent or assistant superintendent) and others did not. Partnerships with high levels of internal administrative support were better able to negotiate personnel reassignment from regular teaching or counseling responsibilities. These partnerships reported favorable access to district support services (student records, computer assistance, business office support) and to the local school board. STC directors in partnerships where administrative support was weaker reported new school-to-career responsibilities added on to already full-time professional responsibilities. One director said that she felt as though upper administration and the board of education had no idea what STC was all about.

Many of Colorado's coordinators, directors, teachers, and staff of STC have been involved in previous vocational education efforts such as tech-prep, cooperative education, distributive education, internships, and so forth. These educators have accomplished similar work (e.g., creating curriculum units in career exploration, inviting guest speakers from the community, opening new opportunities for the elementary grades). So the question of what will motivate educators to participate in a new initiative is relevant to the success of STC. In one interview, a staff member from the chamber of commerce of a large city emphasized the importance of teacher buy-in:

> They're [the teachers] seeing more of how business is part of education . . . and not just education for education's sake. . . . If the teachers believe in how this vision works, and how it really does tie in with what they're doing, it's not an add-on. Then it will continue and teachers will ask business people to come in and speak; they will continue to send their students to business work-based experiences, they'll continue to integrate business skills into their curriculum. (Interview with a staff member of the chamber of commerce in a large metropolitan city)

In fact, faculty involvement and excitement, particularly from academic content areas, became the very focus of some of the local grants. One partnership focused its entire STC grant money on teacher development. Teachers and counselors from middle school, high school, and community college were placed in business, industry, and health care settings. They worked a full 40-hour week and met in seminars to use their work experiences and knowledge to develop curricular units for their students. Another partnership used their Technology Academy and Health Academy to promote integrated learning. Assignments were constructed as real-world projects and evaluated for relevance and accuracy by a team of faculty from English, mathematics, science, and social studies.

The importance of parent support is referenced in several instances. One partnership runs a Parent University where parents sign up for brief presentations by faculty and staff. Another partnership holds formal STC meetings to familiarize parents with their respective programs. Several partnerships take parents on tours of their learning academies, tours of businesses, or both.

Resistance and conflict. In one suburban city, the school board expressed concerns that federal dollars will have strings attached and that STC would force students to make career choices too soon ("Schools Will Pursue," 1996). In another community, the school board initially rejected applying for a STC grant because it was seen as being foisted on the schools by the business community ("School-to-Work Plan," 1996). In Douglas County, the local

newspaper reported on a town meeting with the headline "County Residents Tell School District to Stick to Basics" ("County Residents," 1996). The town meeting brought together students, parents, business people, law enforcement, and educators to build agreement over the purposes and priorities of education.

One source of conflict concerning STC is the different organizational experiences that people bring with them to the partnership table. One CEO explained,

> Some [stakeholders] were more frustrated than others. Some were business people who were used to coming in, making a decision, let's get on with it, let's do it. We don't use the same language. The educators use language, the business people use language and it's not always the same language. Somehow we've got to bridge the gap of just simply how people talk to each other. . . . One of the things that surprised me was how directive some of the other business people on the board want to be with this project. (Interview with the CEO and chair of the steering committee of a large urban partnership)

Much time and energy is required to reach agreement with internal and external constituents. There was no single method of obtaining buy-in, and some partnerships were more successful than others. Willingness to consider new arrangements, flexibility, and open negotiations between parties were some of the strategies referenced by partnership members.

One partnership hired a process facilitator, whose specific task was to keep meeting notes and review understandings that had been negotiated in previous sessions. Inclusionary planning and inclusionary leadership processes, although slowing the pace of change, provided a common basis for defining and operationalizing grant activities.

Politics of Representation

This section looks at the representation on the state management team and how this affects local partnership participation. The state management team for STC (the I Team) consisted of representatives from various state agencies. All five members of the I Team, plus the state director, were each assigned to oversee one of six regions that covered the entire state. They were to offer technical assistance in all aspects of the grant except evaluation. Although some assistance the partnerships received was valued, local partnership members expressed two frustrations: The "state" did not seem to understand how hard it was to start a new system, and the data required for state and national reporting purposes seemed irrelevant so early in the change process.

One way to account for local frustrations was the lack of representation on the I Team of anyone representing local schools or local business and

industries. No employer, school administrator, or teacher served as a member of the I Team. And, although the I Team consulted frequently with leaders in the business world and worked closely with the National Employers' Leadership Council, the day-to-day discussions, decision making, and brainstorming activities were carried out without the benefit of representation of local constituents.

An example of one type of misunderstanding that might have been avoided if there had been local representation occurred at an I Team meeting with the lieutenant governor in the second year of the grant. The focus of the discussion was how to engage regular academic teachers more effectively in the STC movement, given the problems partnerships were having enlisting the support of these teachers. A lack of teacher follow-through had occurred recently in one of the large partnerships, even after much groundwork, and this situation had caused some public embarrassment for both the local partnership and the state office. Repeatedly, I Team members mentioned that teachers were not being asked to *add on* to their workload but rather to merely *reconceive* it. If a teacher or school administrator had been part of this discussion, perhaps a conversation relating to how much add-on work it is to "reconceive one's work" would have ensued, thus enlightening all the members of the I Team regarding the realities of local action and leading a local change effort.

Reconceptualizing the teaching-learning process and the strategies to best carry out that process is intellectually difficult work and takes time and professional development. Therefore, teachers rightfully saw the STC effort as an add-on, and a major one at that. School does not stop so that teachers can think and learn and discuss and read and practice. School keeps going, with all the students attending every day, expecting direct service and all the professional obligations of teachers continuing. This one example illustrates how the I Team might have conceived its own work differently if there had been different representation or added representation.

The Politics of Evaluation

As Cohen (1995) pointed out, "The system one sees depends partly on the vantage point from which one looks" (p. 16). This section highlights some of the internal discussion of the university evaluation team; it describes some of the differences between the university team, the state management team (the I Team), and local partnerships related to evaluating STC. The discussion covers the dynamics of coming together as an evaluation team, of reaching consensus about evaluation approaches, and of developing appropriate responses to the state and local partnerships. It concludes with a more detailed explanation of one evaluation approach and why it was never adopted on a statewide basis.

Internal politics. The Colorado State University evaluation team comprised a research associate, four education faculty members from four separate specialization areas, and as many as four doctoral-level graduate students. The team first met in September 1995 to plan the evaluation work for which it had contracted. Two ongoing tasks influenced the team's work pace, outreach activities, and eventual accomplishments: negotiating a common philosophy and negotiating agreed-upon roles. These tasks will likely challenge other evaluation teams brought together because of their diversity of experience and philosophy rather than their homogeneity. Selected quotes come from members of the evaluation team during weekly meetings, as documented in written minutes of the meetings.

Negotiating an evaluation philosophy. The evaluation team participated in spirited discussions about the general purpose and value of the STC legislation, funding, and the specific purpose of evaluation for local partnerships. Eventual philosophical agreements represented clarification of ideas, acknowledgment of differences, and compromise. Ultimately, the team defined its evaluation activities around a view that STC is associated with building new capacities within local schools and communities. From the team's perspective, the primary purposes for evaluation were to (a) encourage reflection on what was important in local projects and activities, and (b) help partnerships determine how best to collect and analyze information related to local processes, participation, and outcomes.

Internal debates. The team wrestled with the question of whether formative program evaluation should be optional when partnerships had accepted federal funds. Although summative reports were required periodically by both the federal and state grant administrators, local partnerships were only encouraged, *not required*, to use the services of the evaluation team for formative evaluation assistance during the first year of the grant. Meeting minutes indicate the importance the team placed on building relationships and a reluctance to force services on partnerships less enthusiastic about evaluation assistance. "We don't want to establish a good cop/bad cop routine. Our job is to be the good cop" (Minutes, April 16, 1996).

It wasn't until January 1996 that a subcontract was finalized with the state. This subcontract, however, did not end the evaluation team's search for role specificity. Notes from April 1996 raise the following question:

> What exactly is the role of the evaluation team? There seems to be some confusion about whether or not we are actually evaluating the whole statewide effort or just offering assistance to the local partnerships. This confusion exists not only at the partnership level, but also at the state level. (Minutes, April 1, 1996)

The need for role clarification continued throughout the meeting minutes.

> The local partnerships may have a different idea of what the role of CSU evaluation team is supposed to be, and there may be some confusion at the I team level. (April 2, 1996)
>
> Is there still a lack of clarity about what we are supposed to be doing on the site visits? (July 24, 1996)
>
> I don't think they [the I Team] have a clear view of what we should be doing. (November 12, 1996)

Another theme from the minutes was discussion of the university's mission of seeking to understand, not simply providing data from which others would judge the merits of local efforts.

> One of the things that we do is raise important issues, which the I Team may or may not raise. Part of our work is to raise these issues. (June 19, 1996)
>
> They [the I Team] come from a very different framework—they don't want to know about negative effects, or even district local effects . . . they want to tell success stories about people. (December 10, 1996)

At first glance, the emphasis on evaluation to support building capacity appears to be a lessening of an accountability focus. However, the team viewed STC as a major reform initiative integrating academic and vocational education and more in line with what McDonnell and Elmore (1987) termed *capacity building*. Capacity building involves the transfer of money for the purpose of investment in resources, material, intellectual, or human in nature. Future returns are frequently uncertain, intangible, difficult to measure, and distant. Knowledge, skill, and competence are necessary to produce the expected future value. And, the capacity to produce is meaningful in serving multiple purposes. The tangibility and nearness of its effects differentiates capacity building from other policy instruments (e.g., mandates, inducements). Policymakers may confuse the immediate production of results (which inducements provide) and the future benefit that capacity building creates.

The evaluation grid. Having determined a philosophy of evaluation to support capacity building, the evaluation team set about designing an evaluation model that would require mutual participation by both the evaluation team and each local partnership. A model that measured both process and product outcomes was drafted to pilot in the seven original implementation

partnerships with the idea of extending the model to future sites if it proved feasible.

The final model, called "the grid," required the completion of a set of columns and rows related to all the objectives identified by each local partnership within each STC component (e.g., school based, work based, connecting activities, etc.). Upon reviewing each partnership's proposal, the evaluation team began spelling out appropriate evaluation strategies for each section. Decisions had to be made about the level of each activity identified and the potential sources of data collection for each activity. Not all the spaces were completed; some were left open for local partnership members to fill in. The strategy was to visit each of the seven sites, to discuss the potential of the grid, to show the partnership the work that had been completed, and to ask for feedback on the grid's applicability to their partnership's evaluation plan. At a second meeting (and future meetings, if necessary), problems would be aired and dialogue would ensue regarding possible evaluation strategies to solve these problems.

The grid was designed to serve as an emergent evaluation model. This model could be modified to fit each local situation at the same time that it retained a framework requiring accountability to all parts of the STC legislation and state evaluation requirements. The model also fit the evaluation team's philosophy of capacity building in four ways:

1. It honored the prior work of each local partnership in preparing an extensive proposal.
2. It honored process measures, recognizing that building infrastructures and relationships are important activities of any systemic change.
3. It used objectives predetermined by each local partnership to complete the grid, not objectives imposed by an external source.
4. It required a mutual "teaching-learning" relationship between the evaluation team and each local partnership, with each group contributing equally to the development of an effective evaluation plan.

For several reasons, the work on the grid proved somewhat fruitless in terms of assisting partnerships to build their own capacity for evaluation and continuous improvement. Three of the first four local partnerships that were contacted resisted adopting the grid. The fourth partnership had hired an external evaluator who seemed comfortable trying it out. The state evaluator and the I Team chose to make the use of the grid voluntary and as an add-on to other state and federal reporting requirements. Thus, there was no pressure from the grant providers to use the model that the evaluation team had created. In addition, partnerships were caught up in design activities and committee

formation. Evaluation seemed far off, so it had to wait in line to be assigned a higher priority. Resistance also emanated from partnerships' anxiety over being held accountable for additional work. In one rural development site, where the amount of new dollars was fairly small ($15,000), the administrator rejected collecting any information except what was "required" by the state.

In Year 2, the state still made the grid's use voluntary. As the number of partnerships increased from 7 to 64, the team questioned whether it had the resources to offer such a labor-intensive approach. Also, with the 64 sites spread all over the state, travel costs would rise significantly if team members needed to visit each site several times. As a result, although the evaluation grid served to center the evaluation team's focus and to build understanding of the evaluation process, it was never adopted at the local level. Thus, the evaluation team abandoned its use.

The end of the evaluation contract. The state has decided not to renew the contract with the evaluation team for Year 3, referencing the need to cut back costs. Gradually, the work of the evaluation team has shifted—from an original conception of evaluation to support capacity building to new expectations from both the state and local partnerships for evaluation as product development. The team has developed numerous surveys that could be reproduced easily and that generate more quantitative data. It is intended that these surveys, over the next 3 years, will provide accountability data and replace the more "high-touch" conversations of the evaluation team. With this shift, the energy and commitment of the evaluation team have waned, as more perfunctory tasks took the place of creative intellectual interactions with partnership members. Accountability became associated with counting, with the numbers of contacts made, and with participant survey data. The connection of evaluation to capacity building was compromised.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

There are multiple goals to this case study of Colorado's experience with STC. The initial goal was to provide historical and background information about recent federal legislation and how it has been operationalized at the state and local levels. The United States has been one of the last of the major industrial nations to implement a school-to-career system that provides educational and work-related curricula and vocational guidance to students across all ability ranges. Colorado was 1 of 19 states in the second wave of federally funded implementation grants that were funded in 1996. Most, if not all states, will receive similar funding by 1998.

School-to-Work is a national effort to build a system out of what is more of a mosaic of programs across the United States. STC (the Colorado version

of School-to-Work) begins with a recognition that many students are inadequately prepared for entry to the workplace, whether out of high school, community college, or university. With this recognition comes a responsibility to provide guidance, training, employability, and work skills to youths, particularly those youths without resources to develop these skills on their own.

By the time the grant is completed, Colorado will receive about $24 million to implement STC across the state. Sixty-four partnerships are currently funded at one of three levels—development, transition, or implementation, depending on the complexity of grant activities proposed. It is anticipated that additional partnerships will be funded so that virtually all students in the state will have an opportunity to participate in school-to-career activities including school-based learning, workplace learning, and connecting activities. For educators and businesspeople, STC implies new realizations of the limits and possibilities of these connections.

The second goal of the study is to look at the particulars of the policy process in Colorado, in which a substantial amount of federal money was passed along to local partnerships. In the first 2 years of implementing STC, Colorado developed a decentralized system with 64 local partnerships and six regional centers covering about 80% of the student population in the state. Accountability was operationalized through a state management team that provided oversight and programmatic assistance, a state evaluator who assisted with quarterly reports and national surveys, and a university evaluation team that assisted with local evaluation efforts.

The results of this study lead to a few conclusions related to STC and to the accountability process. First, STC must compete with other educational reforms, most notably standards-based education, to capture the attention of school personnel, to obtain administrative support, and to engage the talents and energies of teachers. Unlike other educational reforms, however, STC is accountable to multiple constituents, students, educators, parents, local business community, and multiple state agencies. This puts pressure to build consensus among people who have not normally worked together, and this inevitably slows down the process of bringing a new initiative to fruition.

Among constituents, there are multiple agendas. State politicians see STC as an opportunity to promote an education reform agenda, to hand out money, and to visit local voters. School district and community college administrators look for grant dollars to support ongoing activities. After the fact, the participants worry about how to implement and meet evaluation requirements for their grant activities. Business people express frustration at the slow pace of change and at general ways that schools do business. Partly they lack a behind-the-scenes understanding of school culture, and partly they see an antibusiness ethos in American schools. State evaluators want partnerships to meet federal guidelines and to develop local buy-in to school-to-career

outcomes. The need to satisfy these multiple constituents puts pressure on partnerships to reach common ground.

The study also indicates that coming up with an external evaluation plan, regardless of its alignment with local concerns, will not guarantee its adoption. The complexity of the evaluation task requires detailed and high-touch assistance. Local authorities and site administrators recognize the need for data collection but are less sure how to use data to monitor and improve effectiveness. At the early stages of partnership development, building momentum takes priority over evaluation activities.

Finally, if accountability is to support capacity building, there must be greater attention on the long-term effects of school-to-work policies. Gains are likely to be slow and incremental. Political pressures for success stories and immediate results will continue. However, they must not prevent a broader commitment to improving local partnerships through evaluation, reflection, and informed action.

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6

Authentic Education Accountability Policies

Implementation of State Initiatives in Colorado and Maryland

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In the United States, many states are in the process of developing and implementing new systems of educational accountability. These systems are evolving even as they are being implemented (Elmore, Adelman, & Fuhrman, 1996). They differ from old systems of state accountability in varying degrees, depending on the state. In principle, however, there are three distinguishing characteristics of these new, emerging policy systems. First, because they are designed to improve student performance, they ostensibly refocus state policy on regulating performance by outputs rather than by input (process) standards. Second, the new systems seek to revise student assessments so that they are standards based, focusing on what students should know and be able to demonstrate. Third, there is an attempt, building on a legacy of systemic reform, to link often-fragmented state policies (curriculum frameworks, assessments, accreditation, performance reporting, rewards, sanctions, certification and licensure, etc.) together in a more coherent, mutually reinforcing manner.

The old accountability frameworks tended to be narrower and less ambitious. Often they relied on norm-referenced tests, had no stakes attached to performance, and were isolated pieces in a larger state policy system. This is not to say that the earlier accountability frameworks were unimportant in their impact. Minimum competency tests introduced in the 1970s and 1980s, for instance, certainly had an impact on schools (now lamented). In general, though, state accountability policies as a driver of reform have yielded disappointing

results. The new accountability policies, reflecting recent trends toward more comprehensive reform goals and the need to revamp state policy structures, are certainly more ambitious, even if the verdict still is out on whether they will be any more successful than earlier state efforts.

Amid the turbulent politics of education of the 1990s, the issue of how to sustain such policies therefore has been raised (e.g., Cibulka & Derlin, in press). In that article, we developed a model of policy adequacy that distinguishes between an adoptable policy, a sustainable one, and an effective one. The institutionally relevant requirements, as well as the political and societal requirements, for reaching each level of adequacy are not identical. For example, the credibility of the results of the reform becomes important if the accountability policy is not merely to show that it can sustain itself but that it is effective. An assessment system and the policies surrounding it (e.g., rewards, sanctions, performance reporting) must be viewed as having authenticity. Accountability policy will be accepted as authentic only if the results it produces, or seems likely to produce, are credible in the eyes of a variety of audiences (e.g., policymakers, administrators, teachers, parents, students). The policy must meet some mutually acceptable criteria of performance (accuracy, fairness, reliability, trustworthiness, or other criteria). In this chapter, we develop that argument further and offer an exploratory framework. We will illustrate the utility of the framework with application to two states, Colorado and Maryland, which we have studied over a 3-year period.

METHOD

Semistructured telephone and on-site interviews were conducted with state education officials responsible for policies related to accountability, accreditation, state testing programs, educational standards, and so forth. Through these discussions, individuals from other state and local organizations concerned with K-12 educational reforms were identified and contacted.

Demographic information was reviewed to identify one school district in each state similar in size (5,000-5,500 students) and number of schools (10). Both districts have significant percentages of children in poverty and students of color, although the Maryland district's spending is lower relative to its state than the Colorado district.

Semistructured telephone and on-site interviews/observations were conducted with school administrators, teachers, central staff, and parent/community representatives involved in the implementation of local accountability and school improvement efforts. Using district and school levels of analysis, we explored practices, dynamics, and perception.

BRINGING TOGETHER THREE PERSPECTIVES ON POLICY SYSTEMS

It is useful to think of policy systems in three different ways. One can find scholarly literature to support these three images in the policy literature and organizational studies. We refer to these as the institutional model, the rational policy-making model, and the interpretive model. The key attributes of these models as we will employ them are found in Table 6.1.

The policy world is complex and unruly. It has formal actors who officially set policy (e.g., an elected executive, a legislature, state board of education, school boards, etc.). However, the authority and influence of these formal actors are circumscribed by a broader set of actors—interest groups, pressures from powerful individuals, actions taken by authorities in other parts of the policy system, and so on. Unpredictable and fortuitous events influence agenda setting in policy arenas (Kingdon, 1995).

Institutional Theories

Neoinstitutional theorists capture the way institutional politics work. School systems as organizations are increasingly difficult to separate from their broader environments (Bacharach, Master, & Mundell, 1995; Cibulka, 1995). The institution responds to demands from the environment by elaborating structures disconnected from daily work in schools and classrooms (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Powerful interest groups in the environment reduce the discretion and autonomy required for effective schooling to occur.

Highly institutionalized arenas, in other words, are characterized by complex elaboration of policies and structures that maintain institutional legitimacy and equilibrium. Pluralist and ideological bargaining models provide the frame for capturing how policies are established (Peterson, 1976). Policies must be understood after the fact as bargained (not optimal) outcomes that may only meet a standard of "satisficing" or "muddling through." A policy's ends and means often are unclear. Indeed, it is part of the political logic of this policy environment that poorly defined problems often chase available (and currently popular) solutions. Institutional politics can be unstable. Adopted policies always remain open to review as new appropriations are considered, new agency heads appointed, and other opportunities present themselves for the protagonists in the bargaining arena.

Parsons (1960) provided a valuable framework for examining institutional politics. At this level, organizations must interact with and establish legitimacy with their environments. Hence, the criterion of implementation will be influenced by whether the policy maintains public support. The authority gaps between these domains are considerable. Actors who set policy are

TABLE 6.1 Three Models of Policy

Theoretical Approaches	*Institutional Theory*	*Rational Planning Theory*	*Interpretive Theory*
Key actors whose perspective is critical to "successful" outcome	Institutional stakeholders who shape the policy	Executive policymakers, "experts," and bureaucrats	Local district, community, and school
Conception of policy	Legitimating	Technical	Sociocultural
Purpose of implementation	Maintenance of public support	Instrumental to policy goals	Construction of meaning and values by participants
Important policy attributes/tasks	Bargained consensus on policy's scope of authoritative action and available resources	Elaboration of instrumental policies and procedures, ends-means relationships	Understanding policy's meaning for students, teachers, and others who are affected by it

different from managers or service deliverers; they see organizational (add policy) problems differently and tend to inhabit separate worlds.

Rational Models of Policy

The rational model of decision making has suffered withering assaults in organizational theory (e.g., Burrell & Morgan, 1979), although it still enjoys considerable currency in policy analysis. From this perspective, policy is a set of ends to be achieved. Policy making is the attempt to specify the nature and causes of a social problem and the appropriate responses to that problem. Policy is often referred to as rational if it is goal oriented, although the policy might not meet all the required conditions to be defined as "rational." Much educational policy can be understood as a search for the best approach to funding schools, helping students read better, making them more culturally literate, reducing inequality of educational opportunity, and addressing a host of other policy problems.

Those who are most inclined to see policy in this way are those who must execute it. Policy execution requires that means be elaborated fully in relation to ends. Although politics is not irrelevant to this process, the instrumental and technical aspects of policy elaboration are of special concern to experts and implementers. The latter are responsible for carrying out the policy according to some credible set of criteria that shows a plausible relationship to intended results or outcomes.

The conception of the policy system most appropriate to this model within the institution of public education is a vertical hierarchy where policies move from top to bottom. Whereas institutional politics is characterized by many horizontal and cross-cutting relationships, rational policy setting requires instrumental action within a hierarchy of authority. The state educational authority structure does not conform perfectly to this image, to be sure. School boards enjoy autonomy from state action, principals often are not fully accountable to superintendents, and teachers have discretion to ignore policies imposed on them. Yet, for the rational model, this fragmentation only magnifies the need to shape, to manage, and to control policy so that it achieves prescribed ends.

Policy as an Interpretive Problem

Policy goals and strategies that seem self-evident to institutional decision makers or to state executives may not have the same meaning as one moves to specific school districts and to schools within their districts. Each district has its own culture, a history of policy initiatives and goals that may not coincide with the state policy. Furthermore, whereas a hierarchical view of policy implementation tends to define the local district as an entity, in reality it may be many entities (communities, schools, departments, etc.).

This bottom-up perspective on reform comports with a phenomenological theory in which construction of meaning is problematic. Studies of organizational culture have been particularly fruitful areas of inquiry for interpretive theorists. According to Frost, Louis, Moore, Martin, and Lundberg (1991), this

> fragmentation perspective views ambiguity as a pervasive aspect of contemporary life. . . . Clear consistencies, like clear inconsistencies, are rare . . . consensus and dissensus co-exist in a constantly fluctuating pattern influenced by changes . . . in events, attention, salience, and cognitive overload. Any cultural manifestation can be, and is, interpreted in a myriad of ways. No clear organization-wide or subcultural consensus stabilizes when a culture is viewed from a fragmentation point of view. (p. 8)

Similarly, Weick (1976) has characterized organizations as "loosely-coupled."

Actors can attach a variety of meanings to a policy, depending on their vantage point. This ambiguity is most pronounced the farther actors are from policymakers and the nearer they are to the "local" realities surrounding implementation. Parsons (1960) argues that at the technical level of the organization, innovations are most likely to be resisted because they may disrupt the day-to-day routines. Teachers, for instance, may resist a policy that they do not correctly understand or oppose. Students, parents, and others often are able to undermine the policy, actively or passively.

RECONCILING THE THREE PERSPECTIVES

We argue that all three points of view are salient to understanding the challenges faced by a macro-level reform such as accountability policy in its postadoption period. Hence, an implementation framework should include all three perspectives. This is illustrated with respect to our data from two states, discussed below.

COLORADO

Institutional Challenges

Colorado's standards-based education initiatives stemmed from the recommendations of the Commission on Student Achievement appointed by Governor Romer, an active participant in national education reform. The commission represented the competing interests of reform advocates, business, and traditional political actors in the state. It has prestigious members: the governor, president of the Senate, Speaker of the House, and majority and minority leaders and representatives of the House and Senate education committees. The main challenge in Colorado was (and is) to meet the challenges of systemic reform within the state's strong tradition of local control. The commission's work was reflected in 1993 legislation passed with strong bipartisan support. Content standards; assessment of student achievement at Grades 4, 8, and 11; and public accountability for student achievement and school improvement were implemented.

Prior adoption of state educational goals (1988); National Goals 2000 (1990); and a system of broadly representative state, district, and local accountability committees (1971) facilitated the shift from inputs to outputs in accountability policy.

Despite these facilitating factors, there was opposition to standards-based education (SBE) from both the extreme Right and Left. The conservative Right opposed it as a threat to local control, whereas opposition on the Left perceived potential threats to improved achievement for disadvantaged stu-

dents. During the 1995 legislative session, SBE was again challenged, primarily led by local control supporters. However, with considerable lobbying by Colorado's Alliance for Commerce and Industry, the measures introduced were defeated.

SBE accommodates Colorado's political tradition of local control in several ways: the use of state models rather than legislatively mandated content standards and assessments, broad participation among competing interests in standards development across the policy system, and performance comparisons with adopted state and locally developed standards and assessments rather than comparisons between schools and districts typical of accountability policy in other states.

A Standards and Assessment Development and Implementation Council (SADI) of nine gubernatorially appointed members was legislated. Membership reflects competing interests and is balanced across political parties and geographic region. Colorado's Alliance for Commerce has a keen interest in SADI activity, and support from the business community has been strong.

SADI broadly solicits public opinion to develop model state content standards. Content area task forces include teachers, education specialists, university faculty, and a SADI member. Drafts are submitted for public feedback more than once. A high level of agreement about the standards developed occurred as the community was more broadly represented. SADI has completed work on six academic standards and will develop the remaining model state content standards by January 1998.

State student achievement assessments tied to state standards are being developed with similar involvement among interests and levels of the policy system. Fourth-grade assessments were conducted in 1996-1997, and 8th- and 11th-grade assessments will be added in 1997-1998 and 1998-1999, respectively.

Colorado has not attempted to resolve all the complex problems of implementation and interpretation at the institutional level. The institutional focus has been on developing consensus between competing political, educational, and social interests about the broad goals of school improvement, public accountability for student achievement, and defined educational standards.

Rational Policy-Making Challenges

The challenge for those responsible for execution of Colorado's educational reform is to resolve the instrumental and technical aspects of the state policy to demonstrate relationships between practices and the intended outcome (improved student achievement). Colorado's State Department of Education (COSDE) is using the accountability hierarchy to achieve this goal orientation. The role of existing accountability committees is being redefined as rules and regulations evolve in the system, technical support to local content

standard and assessment efforts as provided through regional coordinators, and the accreditation process is being revised.

Since the 1970s, district and school accountability committees advisory to local school boards connected parents and the community with the educational system. A state-level accountability committee advisory to the state board of education similarly provided a connection for varied state constituencies. The hierarchical relationships of school and district accountability committees were relatively well connected, whereas the district committees remained relatively disconnected from the state committee.

With SBE, the accountability committee's review of student performance indicators and communication with constituencies about student and school performance became more definite, and the state accountability committee achieved greater visibility.

Colorado did not legislatively mandate specific educational standards, rewards, or sanctions for local districts. COSDE used previously existing means (accreditation) to create a plausible connection with new ends (outcomes improvement). By enterprise contract with the state board of education, audit teams appointed by the school principal conduct accreditation audits. The audits are tied to the specific goals and objectives of the school. The district accountability committees (DACs) and school accountability committees (SACs) in the district are responsible for implementation and oversight of the accreditation process at the local level, and individual DAC and SAC members participate in the auditing process. Six enterprise contract districts piloted the program in 1994–1945, which is now required of all districts.

Modifying previously existing means to conform to new goals in Colorado demonstrates instrumental action within an established hierarchy of authority characteristic of the rational policy-planning model.

Interpretive Demands

Balancing SBE with a local control tradition magnifies interpretive demands in the policy system. As local actors must develop and implement their own practice within the broad confines of SBE, issues of creating agreement about what it all means become paramount.

In the local enterprise contract district examined, parents, educators, and community members report, "there are so many new things to learn," "it's tough to figure out all the new terminology," and they experience varying degrees of ambiguity about the future. Meaning about emerging committee roles, goals, and objectives that more concretely identify improved student achievement and school objectives; conducting school performance audits focused on improvement rather than monitoring; and general uneasiness about the future are all interpretive problems. Achieving participation and

avoiding "burnout" are continuing challenges, and variability in responses among principals and teachers on the basis of their interpretation of the intent of the reforms is apparent.

MARYLAND

Institutional Challenges

Maryland's School for Success Initiative resulted from an influential gubernatorially appointed state commission, which issued a report in 1989 criticizing the lack of adequate information on student performance. The powerful state board of education moved to implement many of the recommendations of the report, whose centerpiece since 1991 has been rigorous standards-based tests in Grades 3, 5, and 8 (known as the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program, or MSPAP). In its brief history, MSPAP has withstood several political challenges, including opposition from the Maryland State Teachers Association (MSTA). There is at least tentative information, however, that union opposition to MSPAP may be dissipating. In 1997, the union commissioned a survey of teacher members; an overwhelming percentage favor the testing program despite some suggested improvements.

One of the most controversial features of the Schools for Success program is the reconstitution provisions for low-performing schools. On the basis of an index that relies heavily on scores on the state assessment but also includes other data-based indicators, the state can declare a school "reconstitution eligible." The school must file an approved plan toward improvement and is given 3 years to reverse its low performance. If the school fails to do so, the state can take more dramatic steps to reorganize the school, including contracting with a private provider.

All but 2 of the 52 schools that the state has designated as reconstitution eligible have been in the Baltimore city school system. At the same time, the state had been a defendant in three lawsuits involving Baltimore City, including a challenge to the fairness of the state funding system and to the state's efforts to improve the school system's management. In November 1996, after more than 1 year of negotiations, an out-of-court settlement was reached, which required ratification by the state legislature in its 1997 session.

Briefly, the settlement called for a new board of school commissioners for Baltimore City, jointly appointed by the mayor and the governor from a list of candidates assembled by the state board of education, to replace the mayor's total control over board appointments and operations in the past. The new board would hire a chief executive officer, whose continued employment would be contingent on demonstrating continuous improvement in the academic performance of students and sound management of the school system.

Also, the state would provide a total of $254 million in new state aid, subject to appropriation by the General Assembly.

The settlement proved to be one of the most contentious issues before the state legislature, overshadowing even perennial favorite topics such as expansion of gambling in the state. The major bone of contention was money. Prince George's County, which is Governor Glendening's home district and base of support, asked for additional state aid, as did poor rural counties, and even wealthy Montgomery County. The governor used enormous political capital to push the settlement through, even at the expense of alienating constituencies that are potentially critical to his 1998 reelection campaign. But the political import of the approved settlement for the school reform program cannot be underestimated. It would be hard to sustain the state's sanction-oriented reconstitution program if the state's efforts to deal with Baltimore City had failed. Thus, for a time at least, institutional politics gave Maryland school reform the shot in the arm it appeared to need.

Rational Policy Demands

One of the most serious issues facing the state board of education and the state department of education is how to help the state achieve its ambitious MSPAP goals: 70% of pupils at each school must perform at the satisfactory level or above. The target date for meeting this goal was delayed once already because even the best schools in the state are having difficulty meeting the target. The state board and state superintendent now recognize that they have to improve the "capacity" of the policy system to respond. The state has had no long-term staff development strategy. This had been seen as a local problem, but it is now clear that the state and local school systems must work together. Similarly, state-mandated school improvement teams at many schools are not functioning adequately. The state's reconstitution efforts in the past have focused heavily on compliance strategies rather than capacity building, and the state superintendent has indicated that this needs to shift.

Now that the state is planning a new high school assessment initiative, it is trying to avoid some mistakes of the earlier phase of MSPAP, where performing well on the test has become the aim of the reform for many teachers and principals, rather than improving instruction and other reforms that in the long run might lead to improved test performance.

In other words, from the perspective of state policymakers and administrators, there are many implementation problems that require the fine-tuning of the reform and aligning local actors with the state's goals. These implementation challenges cannot be resolved at the institutional level except in the most general way. They involve leadership and consensus building to be sure, but they also involve strategic deployment of human and material resources through a complex organizational apparatus over a sustained period

of time. This is why implementation is often misunderstood by politicians, who are accused with some justification of seeking quick fixes to problems that experts see as more nuanced and interconnected and certainly less amenable to ready solutions and clear-cut outcomes.

Interpretive Demands

The problems of interpreting policy are nowhere more clear than at the local level and can be illustrated in the small rural school system selected for examination. In 1995, the system was spending about $2,500, or one third less than the state's wealthiest and highest spending school district. The high rates of pupil poverty and the generally conservative nature of the population might have been used as an excuse by the superintendent. Instead, he or she used the reform as an opportunity to form a partnership with the state to garner additional state resources to adopt instructional and curricular reforms. A community-wide planning process was invoked to generate public support for the county's schools. The superintendent procured large numbers of additional grants—mainly modest in size—to help fund the reforms; these provided a focus that often is lacking in larger, better endowed, and more bureaucratized school systems. MSPAP specialists were hired to work in each school. Management reforms such as a school improvement process linked to school-based decision making were emphasized. The school board was an active supporter of the superintendent in these reforms, despite high turnover among superintendents elsewhere in the state. As a result, scores on student assessments continued to rise steadily, although they still remain below the state's target.

Despite this strong district leadership, and considerable efforts to get each school's faculty and school community to buy into the reforms, differences between schools presented a host of implementation challenges. Because of space limits, we will illustrate this point by discussing two elementary schools that had very similar responses to the state reform despite outward differences in the schools' endowments. At one school, 80% of the children were on free and reduced-price lunch, and student mobility was high. The community served by the school is the poorest in the county. By contrast, another school was located in a comfortable middle-class neighborhood, despite some economic and racial mix; according to one informant, the "country club kids" of local businessmen are educated alongside the "bottom-of-the-barrel kids." In both schools, principals were strong supporters of MSPAP and credited it with creating changes in instructional emphasis. Also, the school improvement process led to significant changes in student grouping practices and other important reforms at both schools.

However, teachers at both schools reported that MSPAP made them "feel dumb," although one school had received a state commendation for its

performance. They interpreted the state's rhetoric that schools are not doing well enough as personal criticism. The purpose of the test, it was believed, was to make the teachers teach better (here viewed as a negative goal). Additional funds coming to the schools did not alter their pessimism, particularly at the poorer school, that they could raise their school's score any higher given the perceived constraints under which they work. According to an official at one school, "even if we make improvement, it will not show because the needs of the community are so great. Each cohort is so different." Many teachers at both schools firmly believe that one standard for all schools in the state is unfair, and some point to the state's unwillingness to remedy an unfair funding system. Teacher burnout is a real concern at both schools, mentioned both by teachers and the principals. Other problems were cited, such as the difficulty of interpreting low test scores; what instructional improvements should be made is far from clear, and the time of the release of results makes it too late to develop strategies that can affect the same students. The concerns about the reform raised by faculty and principals in these two schools are significant and could spell long-term challenges for School for Success.

CONCLUSION

Our examination of educational accountability policy in Colorado and Maryland was facilitated by the implementation framework we suggest that combines institutional, rational planning, and interpretive perspectives.

Both Colorado and Maryland cases demonstrate the salience of institutional factors. Although the states vary in their tolerance for central control, each demonstrated sensitivity to competing political interests in the development, adoption, and implementation of accountability policy. However, institutional politics remain unstable and unpredictable: The reforms could be undone.

The rational planning model helps underscore the bureaucratic problems associated with implementing a major state policy. The instrumental actions that are required have important consequences for whether the policy succeeds. State officials have little guidance on many of the choices required to make implementation authentic.

The attention given to one or another of these perspectives varies in the two states. Maryland's strong state initiative has made the rational perspective especially salient. The policy's success is seen by a wide variety of actors as hinging on actions the state takes. By contrast, in Colorado, there is more credence given to local perceptions—hence an interpretive perspective. It appears that each approach has its limitations. An "equilibrium" model might argue that the three must achieve some balance for the policy to succeed. Failure to incorporate an interpretive or rational approach could doom the

policy. At this point, we can only speculate. The framework needs further empirical testing and development.

Problems of interpretation and meaning abound in both states. It may seem inevitable that local interpretations of, and responses to, a reform will vary. Notwithstanding the state's efforts to motivate teachers, their signals can be misinterpreted, even maligned. Moreover, these perceptions may be easily ignored, because often they are masked behind district-level leadership. Despite more state initiatives in Maryland, in both states local actors experience similar ambiguity about the meaning and intent of state policies and express fear of greater state control and monitoring in the future.

Although one perspective may appear dominant at a particular level of the policy system—for example, political factors are more readily apparent at the level of state policy making, and interpretive problems abound at the local level—both states provided examples of the salience of the different perspectives at other levels. It is an interesting aspect of this recent work that an implementation framework incorporating multiple perspectives may prove fruitful in fostering both policy analysis and policy initiatives.

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7

Patterns of Social Control in Assessment Practices in Canadian Frameworks for Accountability in Education

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The educational reform agenda in many industrialized nations today is driven by a perceived crisis in accountability (Cibulka & Derlin, 1995; Earl, 1996; Macpherson, 1995; Mawhinney, 1995; McEwen, 1995). This has typically meant a new focus on assessment as one of the means educational systems ensure that schools are accountable to society for the investment made in them. The history of assessment is closely intertwined with the formalization of public education; however, during the past two decades, there is evidence of assessment-focused educational policy activity of a breadth and intensity previously unknown (Broadfoot, 1996; Earl & LeMahieu, 1997; Neave, 1989).

The explosion of studies of assessment policy issues that have followed have typically focused on initiatives and choices of assessment strategies in particular countries or educational jurisdictions. Less common is research on the more fundamental pressures and patterns of policy response common across different evaluative contexts that inform assessment initiatives and strategies. However, researchers who have undertaken these comparative thrusts report that the social role of assessment is so extensive as to suggest that a "new Evaluative State" is emerging in many countries (Neave, 1989).

Emerging findings of current research suggest that the elements of social control underlying evaluative structures and processes promoting accountability are remarkably similar despite the considerable variation among educational systems. These findings have led to calls for research on varying and constant institutional patterns of social control implied by the new assessment practices being adopted as components of accountability frameworks. The

purpose of this chapter is to highlight institutional patterns and modes of social control evident in assessment practices across the evaluative contexts in Canada's 10 provinces and two territories.

This chapter reports on the second phase of a study of accountability in Canadian education (Mawhinney, 1995). This second phase of research reports on the results of telephone interview surveys of 12 officials responsible for assessment policies in the different ministries/departments of education, and telephone surveys of seven school district personnel responsible for assessment. Notes taken during the interviews were analyzed to identify institutional patterns of social control in assessment practices.

CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

This chapter extrapolates from the theoretical orientation to understanding the dimensions of social control outlined by Patricia Broadfoot (1996) by using conceptions of institutional patterns suggested by March and Olsen (1989). Broadfoot takes her meaning of social control from Bernstein (1977), who argued "how a society selects, classifies, distributes, transmits and evaluates the educational knowledge it considers to be public, reflects both the distribution of power and the principles of social control" (p. 55). Following this line of reasoning, Broadfoot (1996) suggests that the institution of formal evaluation procedures in education was, and continues to be, instrumental in providing and selecting individuals to fulfill specific roles in the division of labor within a particular society. The social control exercised is, therefore, fundamentally about processes of power.

Assessment as social control refers "both to deliberate and planned procedures of measurement and to the uses to which the information so generated is put" (Broadfoot, 1996, p. 6). Techniques of assessment may include teacher-marked essays, exercises, and class tests; standardized tests; periodic school, district, state, and national examinations; standard assessment tasks; school reports; reports to parents; testimonials and references; profiles and portfolios; and, occasionally, formal evaluations by experts outside schools.

These techniques of assessment involve particular institutional patterns of social control. March and Olsen (1989) have defined institutional patterns as rule-bound behavior, including "routines, procedures, conventions, roles, strategies, organizational forms, and technologies" (p. 22). They may "be evaluation rules specifying criteria for assessing results. Rules may regulate the allocation of authority and responsibility, record keeping, and information gathering and handling" (p. 22). In this context, assessment procedures have at least three purposes that provide institutional structures defining routines, roles, forms, and rules: selection, certification, and (system) control.

The "system control" purpose has become increasingly important in current reform initiatives because it has become clear that assessments are not just useful in judging individual potential and performance; they also provide data helpful in judging system quality. Inspection of system quality by school inspectors has a long history in Canada, predating the use of assessment for individual purposes. Recently, however, assessment of the system as a whole has captured the agenda of educational reform. Governments, pressed by problems of rising unemployment and the need to become competitive in a global economy, have turned to various forms of assessment to ensure that education systems are both more responsive to public policy goals and more effective in achieving them.

The resulting accountability-driven reforms have taken diverse forms, and their effects are not yet clear (Knapp, 1997). The changes have, however, generated considerable debate about institutional patterns (roles, strategies, organizational forms, and technologies) and their effects. Some warn that using assessment as a change agent is a risky business, because it is by definition judgmental (Earl & LeMahieu, 1997). Earl and LeMahieu describe the different roles and relationships implied in the two common views of assessment. One view is that educational change "is best realized within the purview and responsibility of some external individual or group in authority who has the power and the mandate to judge quality, exercise control, and order compliance" (p. 158). Implied in this view is an assumption that educators (those intimately associated internal processes of educational change that occur inside classrooms and schools) have the capacity to respond to reforms by changing practices only if they are provoked by externally (and often centrally) imposed mandates, policies, and directives.

Another view of the best means of promoting educational change emphasizes enhancing internal processes that support the improvement of student learning. Assessment reform "is not connected to compliance with mandates but is rooted in the constructivist view that learning depends on self-monitoring and reflection" (Earl & LeMahieu, 1997, p. 159). Teachers are assumed to require support in acquiring the knowledge to improve conditions for student learning. Assessment reform "provides an opportunity for teachers to share ideas, to achieve agreement about consistent and equitable expectations for quality and to create feedback loops directed toward changing the way they teach" (p. 159).

Still others, like Smith and O'Day (1990), argue that there is a need to reorient content and pedagogy in ways that simply cannot be accommodated in the decentralized model of reform that relies on site-based management, professional collaboration, incentives, and choice. Along with other critics, they propose instead that a coherent systemic strategy is required, one that is

neither solely decentralized nor entirely centralized, one that incorporates assessment as a key component (Fuhrman, 1993; Smith & O'Day, 1990).

DIMENSIONS OF INSTITUTIONAL PATTERNS OF SOCIAL CONTROL

Underlying these different perspectives are varying conceptions of the institutional patterns of social control that should be incorporated into assessment strategies. Some of these patterns are now becoming evident as the assessment strategies adopted as part of system change efforts in many jurisdictions are implemented. Institutional patterns reflecting changed allocations of power and mandate to judge quality and exercise control are evident in the new roles, strategies, organizational forms, and technologies associated with assessment activities. Understanding the processes of social control at play, is, however, as emergent as the patterns themselves.

This is particularly the case in Canada, where designation of provincial responsibilities historically created 10 "solitudes" of education, with little common national focus. Until the late 1980s, provinces used different forms of assessment for selection and certification of individual students, with little concern for accountability and systemic reform. In less than 10 years, this pattern has changed dramatically. In Canada now, Earl and LeMahieu (1997) claim that assessment programs are being "intensified, existing practices are being scrutinized, and assessment has become a very political and visible part of educational reform" (p. 150). The next section of this chapter describes some of the emergent institutional patterns of social control.

New Collaborative Roles in Creating a National Agenda for Accountability

Provincial control over education, enshrined in Canada's Constitution, has confounded efforts to generate a national agenda for educational reform. This institutional arrangement has also been the motivation for the creation of the Council of Ministers of Education of Canada (CMEC), bringing together ministers of education and provincial bureaucrats for discussion of common interests. Until recently, the CMEC played a relatively minor role in the social control of education, in part because provinces have carefully guarded their jurisdictional rights and responsibilities over education. Although this is still the case, there has been a significant increase in collaboration between provinces in setting a new agenda for accountability and in implementing a national program of assessment to respond to that agenda. New levels of accord between provinces arose in reaction to public responses to the findings of a 1987 national media survey that found literacy weaker than needed to ensure success in a global economy. The resulting national-level politics of account-

ability led the CMEC to promote provincial participation in various studies of the International Assessment of Education Progress (IAEP), the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). More than 17,000 Canadian students sampled from public and private schools across the country participated in the Third International Mathematics and Science Study in 1993-1994. Several provinces oversampled, enabling provincial comparisons of levels of achievement.

In addition to promoting international comparative assessment, beginning in 1989, in response to public concerns about the state of education in the country, the CMEC developed the School Achievement Indicators Program (SAIP). The program assesses the achievement of 13- and 16-year-old students (according to five levels) in mathematics, reading, and writing on an ongoing cycle. All provinces and territories, with the exception of Saskatchewan, took part in the mathematics tests in 1993, and in the reading and writing tests in 1994. Saskatchewan joined the other provinces and territories in administering science testing for the 1996 SAIP.

Clearly, the CMEC has played an important role in developing a national agenda for accountability. In playing this new role, the council has helped redefine the traditional pattern of provincial control over educational reform agendas. Systemic accountability has been promoted through the CMEC's SAIP. Achievement of individual students in the program's assessments is not identified, and no attempt is made to compare the achievement of students to each other, or to compare schools or school districts. Instead, the SAIP is essentially a measure of how well each provincial educational system is doing in selected subjects.

New Organizational Forms Promoting Social Control Through Assessment

Several regional assessment initiatives have also been developed in the past decade. Funding crises and the accountability crisis of the early 1990s stimulated the efforts of a consortium of Atlantic provinces, the Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation, to incorporate assessment reforms into curriculum revisions. The foundation, regrouping representatives from ministries/departments of education in Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick, prepared a report of indicators in six domains: achievement, participation, cost of education, satisfaction, conditions of schooling, and lifelong learning. Achievement and attainment results were taken from SAIP math and language arts assessments and the IAE math and science testing. Low scores on the SAIP mathematics examinations in 1993 led the Atlantic provinces to work together to develop an improved common math curriculum for Grades 1 to 12.

Individual provinces have also intensified their programs of assessment, sometimes through highly political processes. One of the most ambitious initiatives in accountability is Ontario's creation of the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) in June 1996. The EQAO is the only independent educational accountability agency in North America. It is mandated to provide information about the quality of education and to identify and promote best practices. The EQAO has completed provincial assessments in math, reading, and writing of all students in Grade 3 and with a sample of Grade 9 students.

New Technologies for Social Control Through Assessment

In these initiatives, the EQAO is developing new technologies of assessment that tighten provincial control over classroom practices. All Grade 3 students in Ontario will be tested again in 1998, along with a sample of Grade 6 students, who will be assessed in reading and writing. These assessments will become high stakes for individual schools as the result of freedom-of-information legislation, which now requires school boards to publish assessment results. Stakes will also be high for students in Grade 3, whose examination scores in the first set of comprehensive provincial examinations in reading, writing, and mathematics will be included in their final report. In addition to these, other activities of the EQAO will provide high-stakes feedback to schools on their overall performance. The EQAO is currently developing indicators to be incorporated into school improvement plans.

Changes in the technology of assessment in Ontario are evident in the ambitious efforts planned by the EQAO to respond to criticisms that standardized tests are often not tied to curriculum of the classroom, and the context of communities, and that they measure a very narrow range of indicators of a school's success. As in other tests, Ontario's new provincial examinations will include performance-type assessments, along with traditional items. In addition to making assessments more authentic, the EQAO is examining ways of using large-scale assessments for system improvement.

ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES CREATING AN INTENSIFIED CLIMATE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

The changed roles and new organizational forms and technologies outlined previously in this chapter describe some of the dimensions of the new institutional patterns. Put in action, these roles, organizational forms, and technologies create new strategies for social control that change existing power relations. At the same time, assessment activities cannot be decontextualized from the broader educational reform agenda. For example, the inten-

sified assessment activity in Ontario promoted by the EQAO occurs within the context of school board amalgamation, transfer of residential taxation powers from local school boards to the province, centralization of curriculum, and the creation of the College of Teachers with responsibilities for certification of teachers and accreditation of teacher education, and teacher professional development.

The politics surrounding assessment contributes to the uncertainty and change pervading accountability issues in Canadian education. The various assessment-related accountability initiatives described here have generated considerable public and political debate. Recently, for example, results of the spring 1996 SAIP science test reporting the percentage of 16-year-olds who performed at a Level 3 or better (levels from 1 to 5) indicated a spread of 14% between Alberta students and Ontario students. Alberta educators and educational policymakers attributed these results to a significant revision of teaching approaches and curriculum in science and other core subjects. Alberta developed explicit curriculum guidelines specifying outcomes for students at various grade levels and introduced provincial examinations in Grades 3, 6, and 9, as well as high school graduating exams.

Power Dynamics in Institutional Patterns of Social Control

The new roles, organizational forms, technologies, and strategies of assessment described above create new institutional patterns of social control in Canadian education. The mechanisms at play are more complex than has previously been considered. According to Broadfoot (1996), one of the most common explanations of the power dynamics at play is based on assumptions of differences between centralized and decentralized systems. Conventional thinking suggests that in centralized systems, the power to control educational provisions and processes lies with central authorities; in decentralized systems, on the other hand, such power is dispersed between various interests including local authorities, teachers, and local communities. Such thinking assumes that the assessment strategies adopted in centralized jurisdictions offer strong means of systemic control. For example, this line of thinking suggests that it is likely that where a strong central educational bureaucracy closely prescribes the form and content of education but does not monitor whether the policy guidelines and directives are being followed, the effect of oversight is dissipated. However, the equation of strong control with a high degree of centralization fails to take into account less obvious but equally powerful sources of institutional control and constraints in decentralized systems. These complexities are evident in the following institutional patterns of social control.

Loose Linkage of Assessment-Driven Social Control With Classroom Practice

Although the assessment activities at the provincial, regional, and national levels appear to signal an intensification of control by central authorities, the impact on school districts and ultimately on teaching and learning in classrooms is not yet clear. International and national results report on system performance, and SAIP results offer provincial comparisons. However, even when provincial examinations are offered for graduating students, typically schools contribute half or more of the students' grade. Provincial examinations are not always mandatory for graduation, and even when they are, the pass grade is typically 50%. The effect of the 50% or more of students' grades assigned from classroom marks cannot be ignored. At the secondary school level, the linkage between provincial assessment initiatives and changed teacher practice is particularly tenuous. Ministry and school district officials interviewed in this study agree that most teachers in secondary schools continue to develop their own tests and that at least at the secondary level, little has changed in assessment practices.

Assessment as an Instrument of Normative Control

At the same time, school district officials acknowledge that teachers are more aware of the need to incorporate a broad range of assessment practices, and schools are developing profiles including assessment data. Most important, ministry and school district officials report an increase in consistency of teacher-based assessments resulting from training and professional development for those teachers engaged in school district and provincial examinations. The social control exercised through these professional development initiatives is normative and linked to learning, even though the impetuses for them are accountability-focused assessments.

Arm's-Length Oversight Promoting System Learning

Institutional patterns also reflect the capacity of arm's-length oversight by central authorities to promote system learning. New Brunswick has recently restructured its educational system by removing taxation from local school jurisdictions and eliminating school boards. Its new Education Act creates parents' councils responsible for preparing school improvement plans on the basis of performance reviews. Superintendents are now demanding yearly assessments of Grades 3 and 6 to be used as data for their mandated school improvement planning, rather than the cyclical testing of these grades used in past years. Oversight of assessment policies operates at arm's length from

the ministry and has spin-off effects of improved school district use of assessment data.

This example suggests that researchers need to consider the fact that control requires a system of accountability that includes stages of identification of the performance of the education system in relation to its goals and the response of school systems to shortfalls between performance and goals. A New Brunswick example suggests that the nature of that response is important. Recently in that province, when it became evident that the average grade of students who had written a new provincial mathematics examination was considerably lower than the average grades reported by local school districts, the Ministry of Education brought together all the mathematics department heads to examine whether items on the test fit the curriculum. It was determined that they did indeed match the curriculum. As a result, despite the lowering effect that these results had on student graduating grades, ministry officials decided not to scale the scores. There was considerable reaction and concern from parents, teachers, and students; however, the effect for students was minimized when the ministry officials wrote to universities explaining the new distribution. The universities were happy to have a common benchmark.

Enhanced Accountability and Professional Autonomy Through Process Evaluation

Another emergent institutional pattern of arm's-length control can be viewed as a form of process evaluation. Broadfoot (1996) suggested that process evaluation has been associated with centralized systems able to exert control through the bureaucratic relationships to which teachers are subject. Process evaluation is essentially control of inspection of the quality of the educational process itself. Power over assessment in process evaluation generally rests with the part of the system that controls monitoring and inspection. In the past, this was typically done by central authorities; however, new institutional patterns are emerging that use process evaluation as part of a decentralized system of assessment.

The method of reporting adopted by one school district in Saskatchewan recently provides an example of the potential of process evaluation. In this computerized system of reporting, teachers must identify the exact form of the assessment activity and its contribution to evaluation of particular outcomes. This evaluation approach allowed parents to monitor their child's progress and to compare assessment strategies to outcomes assessed. The effect has enhanced both teacher accountability and professional autonomy because the system allowed teachers to develop individual approaches. District officials report that real changes in assessment and teaching practice have occurred in this decentralized system of assessment.

CONCLUSION

Perceptions of the appropriate role for assessment in social control are deeply influenced by tacit assumptions about purposes and means required to produce educational change. Linda Darling-Hammond (1992) describes two common perceptions of appropriate means of achieving school reform through assessment:

> Two very different theories of school reform are working in parallel and sometimes at cross-purposes. . . . One theory focuses on tightening the controls: more courses, more tests, more directive curriculum, more standards enforced by more rewards, and more sanctions. These reformers would improve education by developing more tests and tying funds to schools' test scores. . . . A second theory attends more to the qualifications and capacities of teachers and to developing schools through changes in teacher education, licensing, and certification processes, . . . professional development schools, efforts to decentralize school decision making while infusing knowledge, changing local assessment practices, and developing networks among teachers and schools. (p. 22)

This chapter has shown that both theories of improvement are reflected in the emerging institutional patterns of social control. New collaborative roles have emerged, creating a national agenda of accountability. New organizational forms promoting social control through assessment have developed. New technologies for social control through assessment have been developed. The institutional patterns reflected in these changed roles, organizational forms, and technologies have resulted in assessment strategies creating an intensified climate of accountability in Canada.

These patterns do not reflect conventional thinking equating centralization with strong control. Emergent patterns show a loose linkage of provincial-level direction with classroom practice; however, they also show assessment as an instrument of normative control, arm's-length oversight promoting system learning, and enhanced accountability and professional autonomy through process evaluation.

These emergent institutional patterns reflect an orientation to assessment as a means of individual and organizational learning and change that cuts across provincial educational regimes. Evidence from discussions with ministry/department of education officials, and a small sample of school district personnel from across Canada, suggests, for example, that most do not want more external testing. They are interested in developing the kinds of links required to foster systemic change, in promoting assessment strategies to maximize student learning through the use of more authentic hands-on testing, and

in developing a broad range of evaluation strategies. Both of these strategies are associated with enhanced student learning. Moreover, Canadian education officials support the idea that professional development for teachers is a priority to ensure that assessment practices are understood and used to enhance student learning.

There is considerable agreement that assessment has become a very political and visible part of educational reform in all provinces. There is also clear evidence of a growing national agenda for accountability, despite strong provincial control over education. Assessment has come to play an equally critical role in the provision of individual and systemic control in many educational policy frameworks. The resulting institutional patterns of social control show, therefore, that both effects of assessment, learning and accountability, are linked in subtle ways to create an intensified culture of evaluation in Canadian education.

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PART II

International Politics of Accountability

8

The Educational Accountability of Schools in England and Wales

JANET OUSTON, BRIAN FIDLER, and PETER EARLEY

In recent years, educational accountability has become a widely discussed issue in many countries. It is often presented as quite unproblematic. Its meaning and its implementation are seen as entirely straightforward. However, on examination, such confidence in the concept cannot be supported. Macpherson (1995a) recently wrote: "There are now multiple purposes, contested concepts and implausible accountability policies in most education systems. In practical and theoretical terms, the area is in a mess" (p. 475). Radnor, Ball, Vincent, and Henshaw (1996) came to a similar conclusion: "The term accountability is used widely, vaguely and incoherently and the issue must therefore be approached with considerable caution" (p. 45).

This chapter reviews the current accountability practices required of, and imposed on, schools in England and Wales (E&W).[1] It attempts—with considerable caution—to evaluate whether these requirements are meeting their intended purposes. As will be seen, there are multiple purposes, multiple outcomes, and some contradictions, which may be even more serious than the "messes" and "incoherence" mentioned above. Often, accountability is presented as self-evidently "a good thing" without any clear understanding of who is being accountable to whom, for what, by what process, and for what purpose. Outcomes, too, are important. Does accountability lead to change?

After describing the current purposes and practices of educational accountability in E&W, it is argued that the main driving force for accountability is currently[2] the "education marketplace." It is also argued that other forms of accountability have, in practice, little direct impact on schools or the educational system as a whole. This may be either because these demands for accountability are not in fact implemented or that there are no mechanisms to ensure (or facilitate) any impact they might have on school practice. As

Feintuck (1994) said, "The evidence presented in this book might well lead to the conclusion that a very real process of privatisation has taken place, in the sense of schools having been removed from effective mechanisms of public accountability" (p. 138). Jenkins (1995) raised similar concerns about the accountability of privatised public services, which he refers to as "the Tory nationalisation of Britain."

ACCOUNTABILITY: AIMS AND PURPOSES

Kogan (1988) argued that there are three broad models of educational accountability that serve different purposes: for public or state control, for professional control and self-regulation, and for consumerist control. Consumerist control can have two forms: (a) for participatory democracy or partnership or (b) to support market mechanisms. He indicated that each of these forms of accountability could be assured only if there were sanctions associated with poor performance.

Patterns of accountability, as set out in the Education Reform Act, 1988 (Department of Education and Science, 1988) and in more recent legislation, had the overall aim of improving educational standards through support for, and pressure from, the educational marketplace. These fit within Kogan's third model: consumerist control to support market mechanisms.

THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

Patterns of accountability in E&W reflect the political context of public services generally. During the past 10 years, the U.K. government has moved from being a provider of services to focusing on setting policy and standards for services provided by others. The newly elected Labour administration seems likely to continue this trend. Many public services such as the provision of electricity, gas, telecommunications, railways, and water have been privatised and others, such as education and health, have been placed in competitive "quasi-markets" (Whitty, 1996). The government has set up regulatory bodies to set and enforce standards of performance. These are intended to ensure that customers receive a service that meets specified criteria.[1] These changes have been made to raise money, to reduce public expenditure, and to encourage entrepreneurial management practices that are seen as more efficient and effective. As Osborne and Gaebler (1992) recommended, the U.K. government stopped "rowing" and started to "steer." Marketisation was presented as "rolling back the power of the state," but Held (1987) argued that it is "a strategy for simultaneously increasing aspects of the state's power while restricting the scope of the state's actions" (p. 244). Other, more cyni-

cal, commentators have described these changes as centralised decision making and devolved blame.

LOCAL MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOLS

The local management of schools (LMS) was introduced in the Education Act, 1988 (Maclure, 1992). Briefly, this act devolved funds (including teachers' salaries) to schools, with the amount of funding depending on the number of pupils each school admitted. This was seen as a powerful mechanism to force schools to be more responsive to consumers' needs. The powers and responsibilities of local education authorities (LEAs)—and their elected councillors—were considerably reduced, whereas the powers of governing bodies, which include parents, teachers, and community representatives, were increased. At the same time, a national curriculum was introduced with linked national tests at the ages of 7, 11, and 14. The United Kingdom already had a national system of examinations taken at 16 years of age.

Parents were assured that they would have a wider choice of schools through the introduction of open enrollment. LEAs retained some of their previous responsibilities, but the balance of power moved very firmly toward schools. Schools were permitted to leave their LEAs if parents wished and become "grant maintained." These schools currently receive funding from a central funding agency on the same basis as their LEA counterparts, but with an additional supplement of up to 15% to compensate them for their additional financial responsibilities. Many have also received very generous capital grants. These arrangements will be reviewed by the new government, and their current financial advantages will be reduced.

Examination and test scores—with no adjustment for the previous attainments of those entering the school—are regularly published, as are inspection reports. Cibulka and Derlin (1995) have argued that the publication of test results in the United States often only serves the needs of external accountability and may have no impact on internal school practices. By setting the publication of test results in the context of parental choice and the educational marketplace, external and internal factors are inextricably linked.

One of the consequences of these reforms has been the creation of increasing differentiation between successful and unsuccessful schools, with most of those perceived as unsuccessful serving disadvantaged inner-city areas. Hierarchies of esteem and performance have been established that further disadvantage the already disadvantaged (Whitty, 1996). From a systems perspective, it might be argued that individual schools have optimised their performance, but at the cost of suboptimising the education service as a whole.

PARENTS AND THE EDUCATIONAL MARKETPLACE

The provision of performance information is intended to raise standards:

> Better information about schools is also important for raising standards. For example, publishing tables which compare the performance of schools has encouraged many schools to take a hard look at the examination results their pupils achieve and how the school can help the pupils to do better. (Department for Education, 1994a, p. 3)

It should be noted, however, that on the choice of school, the *Parent's Charter* (see Note 3) is slightly more guarded:

> As a general rule, you now have a right to a place in a school you want unless all the places at the school have been given to pupils who have a stronger claim to a place at that school. The rules that schools follow when deciding who will be offered places are explained in their prospectuses. (Department for Education, 1994a, pp. 9-10)

Schools may give preference to children with other family members at the school, to those with particular talents or abilities, to those who live near the school, and to those from particular religious groups. The outcome of this commitment to parental choice is that more popular and successful schools choose students, whereas other parents may, at best, be left with a choice from the rest.

GOVERNING BODIES

The powers and responsibilities of school governing bodies increased throughout the 1980s, and in 1989, they took over many responsibilities from LEAs. Governing bodies have a mix of elected (parents and teachers), appointed (by the LEA), and co-opted members who are invited to join the governing body by the elected and appointed members for their particular expertise. Governors are required to "make sure that their governing body reflects a balance of interests. They must also make sure that the local business community is represented by co-opting or otherwise" (Department for Education, 1994c, p. 5). The headteacher is a governor unless he or she chooses not to be. Currently, 80% of headteachers are governors. The size of governing bodies depends on the number of pupils in the school. For a large school of more than 600 pupils, for example, there are five parents, five LEA appointees, two teachers, six co-optees, and the headteacher.

Governing bodies play a pivotal role in the governance and accountability of schools. They are responsible for drawing up the school budget (including staff salaries) and for setting the policy and general direction of the school in consultation with the headteacher and senior staff. Governing bodies recruit teachers and decide on their salaries, ensure that the national curriculum is taught, ensure that parents are kept informed of all aspects of the school's work, and exclude pupils for bad behavior.

The headteacher is responsible for the day-to-day management of the school and for other responsibilities that may be delegated by the governors. There are many ambiguities around the boundaries surrounding the roles and responsibilities of governors and the headteacher, which generally get resolved through the established "custom and practice" in each individual school. Schools are accountable to their governors, and the governors are accountable to the parents and the LEA. It should be noted, however, that there are no direct mechanisms for checking that governing bodies carry out their responsibilities within these guidelines. Provided that governors do not flout the law—on employment or equal opportunities, for example—and that the school remains popular with the parents, they have considerable autonomy in their role. In many cases, however, this increased autonomy has increased the power of the headteacher, who has considerable influence over the decisions of the governing body.

CONTRASTS WITH THE UNITED STATES AND AUSTRALIA

Before moving on to discuss issues of accountability in more detail, we will make comparisons with concepts of accountability elsewhere, drawing on two contrasting articles on practice in the United States and in Australia.

Cibulka and Derlin (1995) undertook a study of performance reporting (PR) across the states of the United States. They identified three sources of pressure for accountability in education: from political and economic elites, from populist pressure, and from professionals. Each of these has its counterpart in the United Kingdom, as will be discussed later. They concluded that, in contrast to the United Kingdom,

> there is little evidence so far that PR has been an important driver of educational reform in many states. State officials with whom we spoke generally described the performance reporting system as not having generated widespread attention, controversy or debate because PR is not considered important by policymakers or the public. (Cibulka & Derlin, 1995, p. 483)

They reported that PR has only been controversial in the small number of states where it has "high-stakes" consequences, either financial or in terms of bad publicity. They argued that in general, there are three sources of impediments to PR being used as a tool for state education policy. These mirror their three sources of pressure: political—particularly the conflict of values that may become apparent between the pressure for increased productivity through accountability and other competing political values such as equity, economy, and local control. This issue is similar to the concerns in E&W about the unfairness of comparisons made by using raw examination results that fail to take account of the impact of social disadvantage on children's performance.

The cost of statewide PR programmes has also led to their abandonment in some states of the United States, as has the challenge to the tradition of local control. There has been no public pressure for PR, and in contrast to E&W, it has been actively opposed by the political Right. Cibulka and Derlin comment that, even though testing is widespread in American schools, "a key point of disagreement within the profession is whether a centralised model of state systematic reform is desirable." There are similar professional anxieties in E&W. The striking difference between this example of current U.S. practice and that in E&W is that there seems to be little notion of the parent—or the student—as a consumer of the school's services, with associated rights and expectations. In E&W, the political rhetoric behind accountability is the bid to "drive up standards." This is to be achieved through national testing, the national curriculum, national inspection, and ensuring that parents are informed about school performance so that they can operate rationally within an educational marketplace, choosing what they perceive to be successful schools (and thereby increasing their income) and avoiding the less successful.

In contrast, Macpherson's (1995b) study of stakeholders' views of what should be included in an educational accountability programme presented a very wide set of possible "processes and criteria" that might be included in a school accountability programme. Even considering only those where there was general agreement between parents, teachers, and administrators, if all were included, schools might well spend most of their time filling in data returns to meet the needs of the accountability bureaucrats—but measuring a tree frequently doesn't make it grow any taller. The author raised three very important issues: the purposes of accountability, the values that underpin it, and the need for more communitarian ways of defining and discharging obligations.

If, however, Macpherson's processes and criteria are seen as a framework for inspection, along the lines of E&W's Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) schedule, then the task might appear to be more manageable. But this approach may not lead to an entirely satisfactory outcome. Attempting to assess "teachers' attitude towards students and colleagues" (p. 553) will

raise further issues. First, what evidence do we have that particular teachers' attitudes enhance or diminish students' learning, and once this is established, how do we measure (or record, or change) teachers' attitudes? What values lie behind the choice of measures? These linked issues of validity, reliability, practicality, and values haunt all accountability practices, including those of schools in E&W.

ACCOUNTABILITY TO PARENTS

In the *Parent's Charter* (Department for Education, 1994a; Department of Education and Science, 1991) parents are told that they will receive five key documents to ensure that they are fully informed. These are

1. An annual report about their child, which includes national examination and test results, attendance, and attainment in nontested subjects and other activities.
2. Regular reports from OFSTED-registered inspectors. Inspection now takes place on a 6-yearly cycle with inspectors working to a national inspection schedule.
3. Performance tables of national test and examination results, which are published annually.
4. A prospectus or brochure about the school, which is prepared according to national statutory guidelines (Department for Education, 1994b).
5. An annual report from the the school's governing body (Department for Education, 1994b).

It should be noted, however, that these forms of accountability have very different enforcement mechanisms. Reports to parents are a long established part of educational culture in the United Kingdom, but there are no mechanisms for checking their content. Inspection (which will be discussed in detail below) received considerable attention in its first few years. More recently, there has been less public interest, and schools have come to realise that provided they do not fail their inspection, it actually may have little impact beyond the general moral pressure to take account of the findings of fellow professionals. A school that is not "failing" and remains popular with parents can at present fail to meet some statutory requirements with relative impunity. Whether this will change as schools are inspected for a second time remains to be seen. (Schools will be reinspected from September 1997.)

Examination and test performance tables[4] have been published for the past 3 years. The extent to which parents actually take account of schools' positions

in these tables in making their choices, and hence put pressure on schools, is unknown. But within the teaching profession, the impact of league tables is reduced, given that they do not take account of either the attainment of individual children on entry to the school or the socioeconomic conditions of the community that the school serves. There is considerable interest in developing national value-added tables that are fair, easy to interpret, and parent-friendly.

Goldstein and Myers (1996) argued that performance indicators can, and should, be presented within an ethical framework. This would have two basic principles: the avoidance of unwarranted harm and the right to information. They accepted that the second may conflict with the first and argued that in this case, the first takes priority. But how realistic are these admirable aims? To quote from the section of their article on the avoidance of harm, they say that "when schools are ranked by examination or test scores it should be made clear that this is not a ranking by educational quality" (p. 14). A challenging task indeed.

The contents of school prospectuses and annual parents' meetings is specified, but there is no direct enforcement. The OFSTED inspectors might comment on any omissions, but for "adequate" schools, there is no further statutory action. It should be noted, however, that a properly constituted annual meeting of parents may pass resolutions that the governing body is required to take note of. Making dissatisfaction explicit through formal resolutions can create pressure for change.

EXPECTATIONS OF HEADTEACHERS

The recently instituted National Professional Qualification for Headship requires aspiring headteachers to take a module on accountability as part of their accreditation. They are required to "demonstrate that they possess the appropriate skills, knowledge and understanding to account for the effectiveness and efficiency of a school to the governors and others, e.g. pupils, parents, staff, local employers and the local community" (Teacher Training Agency, 1997, p. 6). This statement makes very clear who is being accountable to whom and for what. But the process remains unspecified. It is for headteachers themselves to decide what is most appropriate. Again, there is no direct enforcement, but clearly such accountability is intended to be consumerist.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND OFSTED

In the autumn term of 1993, the first secondary schools were inspected by OFSTED, which contracts out school inspections to private teams, who carry

out the inspections by using national criteria. Initially, inspections took place every 4 years, but this period has recently been extended to 6 years for most schools. (See Davis, 1996, for a brief description of the OFSTED inspection process. Minor changes have been introduced recently, including the identification of particularly strong, or weak, teachers.)

In a secondary school of about 1,000 pupils, an inspection would last 1 week with up to 10 inspectors taking part. All aspects of the work of the school are covered, including the management of the school, teaching and learning in classrooms and elsewhere, school documents, and all school facilities. A report is written to a set format, and a summary is distributed to all parents. Copies of the full report are available on request and are also placed in local public libraries. They are also available on the Internet (http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). Inspectors are required to include recommended "key issues for action," and schools are required to write an action plan setting out how these will be addressed. Our own research (Ouston, Fidler, & Earley, 1997) shows that schools distinguish between what they perceive as important issues and less important matters. They also choose to make more progress on some issues than others. For most schools, there is no further contact with OFSTED until their next inspection.

In two groups of schools, there is much closer contact with OFSTED after inspection: those that are deemed to be at risk of failing and those with serious weaknesses. Failing schools may have up to four additional governors placed on the governing body and may ultimately be closed. In these instances, there may be very direct consequences of an accountability process. Schools with serious weaknesses are kept under review. These interventions are currently the only direct actions available to the state to enforce change within a school other than the Secretary of State's very general powers restated in the 1996 Education Act to direct LEAs and governing bodies considered not to be properly exercising their powers (Department for Education and Employment, 1996).

Inspection, and the publication of test and examination results, can be seen as serving two of Kogan's accountabilities. The chief inspector of OFSTED bases his annual report on the school inspections undertaken during the year, so they can be seen as providing accountability to the state. Inspection reports and test results also provide information to consumers to support market mechanisms.

ACCOUNTABILITY AS CONTROL

There is an increasing awareness of the ways in which new patterns of accountabilities are changing the values and practices of teachers. Harland

(1996) argued that educational evaluation can lead to compliance, patterning, and surveillance. These also apply to educational accountability.

Compliance is the most straightforward: Is the school performing as it should? OFSTED inspectors focus explicitly on compliance. Patterning is more subtle and has been referred to earlier as league-table thinking and OFSTED-speak. Teachers take on the values and language of the accountability mechanisms. Drawing on Foucault's (1979) ideas about surveillance, Harland argued that teachers may begin to regulate their own behaviour in line with what they perceive the government expects. This comment is supported by our own research finding (Ouston et al., 1997) that as schools gained more knowledge of inspection, they were more likely to make changes before inspection rather than afterwards.

WHO AUDITS THE AUDITORS?

The changing role of central government, from provider of services to regulator of services, has already been discussed. Power (1994) reviewed the growing role for auditors that this change has created. He argued that Britain has become "an audit society." Like Kogan, he distinguished between professional audit, which is undertaken to improve the quality of services, and external audit, which attempts to control the service. He pointed out that when organisations fail, the common response is to call for more audit—indeed, sometimes to audit the auditors. He argued, as do others, that the nature of the audit influences the performance of the service: Schools change their practices to conform with what they think OFSTED expects. The auditors have become part of a surveillance system that professionals incorporate into their thinking.

Power also argued that the emphasis on audit reflects not only the government's withdrawal from the provision of services but its lack of trust of the professionals who provide the service. Indeed, this initial lack of trust is compounded by the audit process itself. The purpose of audit and accountability is to raise standards of service; however, the process of audit may lead to declining standards of performance through the lack of trust and autonomy of professional staff.

THE FUTURE?

It is difficult to predict future patterns of accountability. The Labour government has recently announced that primary school league tables will be published within each local authority area only, rather than nationally. It also seems likely that inspection as currently undertaken may come to be seen as less cost-effective, and a move may be made from quality control (by

OFSTED) to quality assurance by schools themselves (Kelly, 1996). LEAs may be given responsibility for ensuring the quality of educational attainment and provision in their area, with a national inspection service being used to check on the work of local inspectors. These local inspectors may also be given responsibilities to advise schools, taking them back to responsibilities they held before the 1988 act. Nevertheless, the current limitations on public expenditure might require funding to come from the existing schools' and inspection budgets. Schools have, however, generally responded very positively to devolved funding and would be reluctant to lose their financial autonomy.

Ball (1990) argued that under the Conservative administration, there were tensions throughout the education system resulting from the conflicting values of "marketeers" and the "neoconservatives." The marketeers wished to leave educational decisions to parents, whereas the neoconservatives were concerned with raising education standards, mainly through a national curriculum. This tension is found at all levels of the education service and also in the decisions to be made about accountability. At present, it seems that accountability to the consumer is a more powerful pressure than the pressure to meet national standards. But this uneasy balance seems likely to change under the new government and swing more toward "standards" and away from the market. The accountability of schools seems likely to remain a problematic issue.

NOTES

1. This chapter discusses educational accountability in England and Wales only. There are many differences between the education systems of England and Wales, and of Scotland and Northern Ireland, the main being that site-based management is much more advanced in England and Wales. In Scotland and Northern Ireland, local authorities still maintain many powers that have been devolved to schools in England and Wales. This chapter is also mainly focused on the accountabilities of *schools*. The accountability requirements of colleges and universities are very different from those of schools.

Local education authorities also retain some responsibilities for the educational system in their area and are accountable for these to the community and to central government. These are discussed in Radnor, Ball, and Vincent (1998).

2. It should be noted that this chapter is being completed just after a change of government from Conservative to Labour. Although the Labour administration seems likely to continue many of the changes introduced in the 1988 and subsequent education acts, it is also possible that they will introduce new legislation to attempt to mitigate some of the most damaging consequences of the "education marketplace," but retain those aspects of legislation that have been broadly welcomed.

3. It is interesting to note that the first edition of the charter was called *The Parent's Charter* (Department of Education and Science, 1991). Clearly, it was intended to be a charter for the individual parent rather than for parents collectively or for the whole community, and it reflected the marketisation of education and the parental role as customer. The second edition was called *Our Children's Education: The Updated Parent's Charter* (Department for Education, 1994a). The text remained very similar except for addition of new legislation passed between 1992 and 1994.

4. Performance tables have become universally referred to as "league tables," a term that comes from football league tables and may reflect the ambivalence with which they are viewed. The extent to which they actually influence parental choice is not known, but they do appear to contribute to the public view of the school.

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9

Local Educational Governance, Accountability, and Democracy in the United Kingdom

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It is now fairly commonplace to point out the way in which the various provisions of the most recent Education Acts in the United Kingdom, against a background of other, more general local government legislation, have reduced the powers and role of local education authorities (LEAs) through a dual process of devolving (to schools) and centralising (to government ministries and agencies) roles and responsibilities previously invested in the LEA. Writing in general terms about local government, Leach, Stewart, and Walsh (1994) concluded that

> from all these changes a challenge has come not merely to the organisational assumptions, but to the role of local government as an agency for the direct provision of services. The challenge is clear: what is not so clear beyond a broad statement of the enabling role, is the future of local government. (p. 37)

This chapter draws on qualitative data from an 18-month study focused on the responses and interpretations of four LEAs to the policy framework put into place by the 1988, 1992, and 1993 Education Acts (Government of Great Britain, 1988, 1991, 1992). The study employs the perspectives of "critical policy analysis," that is, the use of case analysis, to critically examine the impact and effects of policies in specific locales, to extend the analysis of policy beyond the agendas set by policymakers, and to ask sociological questions about the social and societal consequences of policy.

> The personal values and political commitment of the critical policy analyst would be anchored in the vision of a moral order in which justice, equality and individual freedom are uncompromised by the avarice of a few. The critical analyst would endorse political, social and economic arrangements where persons are never treated as a means to an end, but treated as ends in their own right. (Prunty, 1985, p. 136)

And, as Harvey (1990) pointed out, critical social research is "not bounded by a single [grand] theoretical perspective. It is not [a version of] Marxism, or feminism, or anything else for that matter" (p. 8; see Troyna, 1994). The critical analyst must take risks, use imagination, but also be reflexive. The concern is with the task rather than with theoretical purism or conceptual niceties. However, some modesty is also required, in particular a willing uncertainty and a reluctance to leap to analytic closure. The task then is to examine the moral order of reform and the relationship of reform to existing patterns of social inequality bringing to bear those concepts and interpretive devices that offer the best possibilities of insight and understanding.

In the study reported here, qualitative data were gathered by interviewing key actors and using semistructured and open-ended interview techniques within each LEA. Both elected councillors and officials were interviewed. The interviews explored a range of issues related to recent changes in the structure and methods of local educational government and local educational relationships. In addition, a sample of other primary stakeholders in the local education arena were interviewed about their interactions with, and perceptions of, the LEA and their views about their own local accountability. These LEAs included headteachers, school governors, and parent representatives. Alongside the interviews, members of the research team attended council meetings, school meetings, parental group meetings, and public meetings and collected relevant council documents, publications, and minutes. The four case study authorities were chosen to represent a mix of political control (Labour, Conservative, and Liberal-Democrat), size, location, and demography and history. They are Cwmshire, Metroland, Northerton, and Westmoor.

Our purpose in this chapter is twofold. First is to convey some of the confusions, gaps, and difficulties faced by LEAs as they attempt to find a new rationale, role, and method for themselves in relation to local systems of educational provision. In respect to this, we will also identify three different responses or interpretations of rationale, role, and method demonstrated by case study LEAs. Second, we want to relate both the practical difficulties and interpretations identified to deeper confusions about the past and current purposes of local government and local democracy.

THE LEAs' MANAGEMENT OF CHANGE

Two of the main underlying features of the interviews and case study materials collected for this study are the state of flux, of continuous change, in almost all aspects of local government activity and the concomitant sense of uncertainty about many aspects of local authority responsibilities and future directions.

Managing Changing Relationships

Government fiscal policy in the state educational sector is a principal determinant in the new forms of relationships that now exist between LEAs and their schools. Local authorities overall now only provide between 15% and 20% of the funding of their expenditures from the local tax base. Furthermore, budgetary allocations are now determined by the Department for Education and Employment's (DfEE) approved formulas and are limited by the setting of government-fixed spending assessments (SSAs) and the imposition of strict ceilings for borrowing for capital projects. In addition, the development of grant-maintained schools (GM) (which, by a vote of parents, "opt out" of local authority control and receive funding from government via a newly created agency, the Funding Agency for Schools [FAS]), reduces resources available for LEA central services and imposes various direct and indirect inhibitions on LEA policies. Altogether, budgetary devolution and concomitant reductions in the "top-slice component" of education budgets have drastically altered the balance of power between LEAs and "their" schools to the extent that many of the LEAs' remaining services rely on the willingness or choice of schools to "buy back" into their services within a free market. Our findings in this respect equate with those of Leach and Stewart (1992), who found that in becoming competitive, local authorities have had to relinquish many of their long-established practices and habits in the allocation and costing of work, with the effect of enhancing the power of officers at the expense of councillors.

The Language of Change

The changes in LEA structures and practices have not simply been technical and organisational; they are also cultural. These cultural shifts are evident, in one respect, in a new lexicon of relationships and accountability. All the LEAs in the study now use the language of partnership to describe their changing relationships with "their" schools. However, this rather overplays the impression of similarity between them; when the *nuances* of language use are considered, important differences between the LEAs begin to emerge.

In Cwmshire (a Welsh, Labour-controlled council), an open style of management and a flexible, responsive approach to the needs of client groups are

primary aims. Cwmshire's early willingness to engage in Local Management of Schools, or LMS (the system of budgetary devolution to schools, which means that schools now control all their spending, including salaries, employ their teachers directly, and "own" their plant), and to establish clear financial accountability within the executive arm of the LEA are illustrative of its willingness to move forward within the frameworks set by Conservative government policy. Cwmshire has developed a culture and set of working methods in which service, partnership, and consultative-participatory relationships influencing policy operations are emphasised. Westmoor (a Liberal-Democrat-controlled Shire County) propounds notions of "family" and "community" as central values of its education culture. The service is managed within the underlying principle of putting education before politics at the local level. Education councillors of all parties, with the education officers, create a climate of consensus, a joint venture in interpreting government policy. They actively nurture the schools by providing a service that is attuned to their needs, claiming the notion of partnership to establish collaborative relations with schools.

For Cwmshire and Westmoor, partnership, used alongside collaboration and consultation, frames the concept within the notion of *civic association* (Giddens, 1994), that is, the living along with others in a way that respects autonomy (the LEA accepting and promoting LMS in schools) but with a consciousness of the existence of one another in a civic situation (the pursuit of a policy of "a community of schools").

For Northerton LEA (a Labour-controlled, metropolitan council), the management of a newly structured, again, so-called user-friendly service has been the main aim since 1988. The LEA and "its" schools have set out to avoid straightforward implementation of either the business culture or market ideology that underpinned the Conservative government's educational reforms. In Northerton, partnership is used more narrowly to refer to interdependence; this frames the concept within notions of the *civic provider*, what Ranson (1995), in his research of educational governance, defined as "continuing to retain a strong corporate identity as an all purpose unitary local authority which seeks to meet all the educational needs of its area" (p. 14).

Relationships between Metroland LEA (a Conservative-controlled borough council) and "its" schools is generally very different. However, as in Northerton, Westmoor, and Cwmshire, despite the difference in political and ideological contexts, the chief education officer in Metroland employs a language of "partnership." The LEA has moved away decisively from the concept of corporate public sector provision to what the chief education officer describes as a "local education service." The Conservative-controlled Metroland Council and its senior officers have actively encouraged secondary schools to opt out of direct local authority control. Metroland frames the

concept of partnership within the notion of the civic condition as a market; a form of "enterprise association" (Giddens, 1994). Relationships are based on contracts, and the LEA relates to each of its clients on an individual basis (the LEAs promote themselves to the GM and LEA schools alike).

The new language adopted by these LEAs transmits powerful cultural messages, which, despite (in the first three cases) their caution and resistance toward business/market relations and associated practices, contributes toward the "commodification" of education and development of consumer consciousness—key aspects of Conservative government education policy (and which the current Labour government shows no sign of dismantling). The prescriptions of contemporary management theory are taken seriously, but relations based on partnership and consultation bring particular nuances to "getting close to the customer." A sharper ethic of efficiency has been developed by all. This is manifested in the way the services have been "streamlined." Nonetheless, theory and rhetoric have been "tweaked," in at least the first three cases, to embrace the attitudes, beliefs, and values that are legacies of more traditional political and public service systems."

Similarities and Differences in the Process of Change

Despite these variations in the interpretations and resulting practices in Northerton, Cwmshire, and Westmoor, there appears to be a common view underlying their continuing commitment to political accountability as opposed to market accountability. "An LEA is the only body with the democratic legitimacy to take an overall view of the educational needs in the locality" (CEO, Northerton). Analytically, two questions arise. The first question is whether the similarities of, or differences between, these LEAs are of most importance. The second is whether the intervention of the central state to rework local government and local democracy is of overriding significance compared with the tweaks, resistances, and nuances offered by individual local authorities. On one hand, we do need to emphasise the ways in which the requirements of legislation and their attendant discourses have significantly shifted the relationships and responsibilities within the four LEAs. However, on the other hand, it is necessary to acknowledge the freedom to manoeuvre available to and exploited by each.

Metroland is proactive in support of change; finding the new "market" forms of local governance conducive, it interprets its role as an agent of central government and has pursued possibilities for extending and developing the existing policy framework. This is what might be called *overinterpretation* and perhaps comes closest to notions of neoliberal democracy.

In contrast, Northerton typifies reluctant accommodation. The LEA is basically unsympathetic to most aspects of the government's policy framework and interprets its role, to an extent, as an obstacle to the central state.

The LEA continues to assert the importance of its responsibilities to the whole community and, in doing so, trades on its residual moral and political authority in the locality it serves. This is what might be called *underinterpretation* and perhaps comes closest to notions of social democracy.

Finally, LEAs like Westmoor and Cwmshire are pragmatic accommodators. They act as *conduits* for the central state, taking on policies as given and making the best of it, trading on their administrative expertise and consultative relations with their communities to attempt to maintain local relationships and preserve the status quo. This might be called *partial interpretation* and perhaps comes closest to notions of liberal democracy.

CHANGING CULTURES, CHANGING FORMS OF DEMOCRATIC ACCOUNTABILITY

We will now discuss the effect that the legislative changes have had on the enactment of democratic accountability for the adequacy and availability of local educational provision. The most obvious conclusion to be drawn from the data is that most of the time, the term *accountability* is used vaguely and incoherently. For the most part, accountability is implicit in practice rather than explicit in principle. However, some kind of touchstone definition may be useful here.

In her discussion of the principle and practice of democratic accountability, Simey (1985) wrote the following:

> The theory is simple enough. In a democracy it is only by the consent of the people that authority to govern can be delegated. And that consent is given on one condition, that all those who act on our behalf will hold themselves accountable for their stewardship. This holds good whether they be elected members or officials. Accountability is thus the solid plank on which our whole political system rests. There can surely be few who would deny the validity of that claim. (p. 17)

From this perspective, political accountability is based on the assertion that authority is derived from the people, who, once having elected their representative councillor, find themselves distanced from the decision-making process at the local level. Similarly, Day and Klein (1987) point out that the notion of authority infers a right to call people to account. However, they further argue that for accountability to be meaningful, the right to call people to account must be complemented by the ability to call people to account through the exercise of control over their performance. Margaret Simey (1985), councillor of many years standing, also makes this point and argues for the need:

> to grasp the fact that accountability is not a mechanism or a routine but a *principle*. More than that it is a principle which serves a purpose. In a democracy, that purpose is to provide the basis of a relationship between society and its members, between those who govern and those who consent to be governed. The word consent provides the significant clue, implying as it does the striking of a bargain or the drawing up of a contract between people who are partners in some joint enterprise. (p. 20)

With some degree of simplification from our research (and evidence from other sources), three emergent/transitional interpretations and enactments of LEA accountability can be identified (see Table 9.1). These terms are used to emphasise the instability of these responses in light of continuing change. The differences between these three models are sometimes subtle rather than clear-cut, and in each case, in different ways, issues of democratic accountability are crosscut and confused by concerns about service accountability.

Conservative government legislation gave primary emphasis to the third model and was designed directly to weaken the first and indirectly to inhibit the second. In *general terms*, these models can be related back to specific authorities in the study.

Model 1: Exemplified by Northerton

Attempts are made to relate service provision to community needs and interests. Here, relationships with schools are carefully separated from those with parents/students. Equal access is a key criterion of system performance. This model is explicitly political, a politics of the Left and centre Left. The Development Plan of the Northerton Education Committee for 1993-1996 sets out the collective vision for the LEA. The opening statement, "An LEA . . . is the only body with the democratic legitimacy to take an overall view of the educational needs in the locality," underlines the continuing commitment to the local historic, political culture, which emphasises the importance of local political accountability as opposed to market accountability and which stresses the importance of the local authority as the vehicle through which locally responsive education is provided. In the "calling to account" of councillors and officials, the realization of social principles, as well as the costs and effectiveness of provision, is important. Simey's account of stewardship underlies this model.

Model 2: Exemplified by Westmoor and Cwmshire

Emphasis is primarily on service provision, with relationships with schools to the fore. The smooth running of the local system rests in good part on the satisfaction or management of diverse interests and the maintenance of a stable consensus about the structure and adequacy of provision. Aspects

TABLE 9.1 Three Models of LEA[a] Accountability

Model	*High Priorities*
1	Community needs and local political goals
2	Maintenance of service provision and support for schools
3	Cost reduction and performance and monitoring

a. LEA = local education authority.

of an older, more paternalistic and personal form of leadership and county hall politics remain important. In this model, the workings of the education service are considered to be more effective at serving the community when divorced from politics (with the exception of issues related to GM schools). Here, the school and the community, the service and the "client," are essentially undifferentiated. Within this conception, accountability is represented in professional and personal terms. The CEO remains as a key figure who stands for, or embodies, the LEA and its mission. This contributes to the abstract and reified quality of presentations of accountability in these LEAs.

> I'm accountable to the Committee for the efficient management of the service which is half financial and half professional. I'm accountable to the schools, governors and parents in particular in terms of strategic direction, appropriate resourcing, sensitive prioritising. I'm accountable to the teachers and the children because of the leadership role I have regarding curriculum, pastoral support to parents and teachers. So there's equality, pastoral and financial issues there. (CEO, Cwmshire)

Democratic accountability is a deeply embedded subtext with councillors, who believe themselves to be accountable through having been elected democratically to represent the community. The political and social functions of education are given little attention, and its form and content are taken to be neutral. Simey's argument about "those who govern and those who consent to be governed" is central in this model.

Model 3: Exemplified by Metroland

This model, like Model 1, is explicitly political but a politics of the Right. As noted already, Metroland has shown a great enthusiasm for Conservative government initiatives. Great emphasis is placed on the quality of provision, and business and management methods are employed to ensure efficiency, measured by fixed performance indicators. The formal relationships between the LEA and schools in Metroland are now set within a very clear client-contractor

culture. The authority may provide services to schools on a business footing, but it does not see itself having a responsibility for offering educational leadership or setting social priorities. The meeting of needs here rests on the actions of individual consumers (parents/students and schools) and is based on exchange relationships. However, alongside this, with local and central government cuts in overall levels of funding and the devolution or contracting out of central services, the LEA workforce diminishes, and with it, the ability of the LEA to deal with even its remaining responsibilities and the needs for support of local schools.

> The only reason, I mean, if you think about it, the only reason perhaps I would think about being GM is my . . . anger . . . anger because . . . it would perhaps tie in with your question because there is a local education authority to some extent, there is some left . . . is the local education authority left, the one I wanted? Take, for example, now I'm supposed to redo teachers' contracts . . . I resent that . . . I mean, this is yet another piece of . . . worry because I don't know about contracts. (Headteacher, LEA primary school, Metroland)

In Metroland, local democracy is expressed through the choices of individual clients and the responses of individual schools. The authority is a mediator between clients and service providers. In this way, it is accountable through the information it offers to its clients and service providers. It operates not so much a market system as a management/business system. Politics and education are commodified. In a narrow sense, this may be seen to meet Simey's criterion of drawing up a contract. The contract here is based on maximising quality and minimising costs.

Having tried to establish some kind of clarity for these different models of LEAs and local accountability, it is important to make the point that neither in practice nor in the language of legitimation are things as clear-cut as they might first appear. Officers and councillors have a broad discursive repertoire up which they can draw to legitimate a variety of practices and relationships. At different points in time, for different audiences and for different purposes, different languages and practices are deployed. Ideology, practicality, and constraint intertwine in complex ways in the current functioning of LEAs. Almost all aspects of the three models are embedded in the following account offered by the CEO of Northerton:

> Who do you think that I, the director, am accountable to? There's a need to be accountable to schools, for arguing hard and successfully in terms of resources, but there is, of course, a strong accountability to manage our budget, however small or large it is, that's more to do with tighter resources

than educational legislation. The director is supposed to manage a £200 million budget to within about £300,000, which I think few could manage. And I think there is an increasingly much sharper accountability about performance, very interestingly enough because the legislation actually gives responsibility for delivering the National Curriculum to the governors of schools more explicitly than any previous legislation, and yet the effects are of an increased inspection arrangement. We are developing it now and contextualising the league tables.

ACCOUNTABLE FOR STEWARDSHIP: RESIDUAL PRACTICES AND INFORMAL RELATIONSHIPS

As we have indicated, apart from their various residual statutory responsibilities, LEAs are now operating in a kind of organisational and political twilight world where issues of accountability and democratic politics are often obscured in deep shadow. Being accountable for stewardship in Simey's terms is no longer clear-cut and therefore open to multi-interpretations arising out of the different cultures previously established within LEAs. Much is uncertain in an area of public service as complex as education, not the least because the legislation of the 1988, 1992, and 1993 Education Acts has created a number of grey areas. Important issues in LEA-school relationships remain unresolved, and on certain points the legislation is actually contradictory. "The biggest criticism of all the recent legislation is that it is not consistent with itself" (CEO, Northerton). The practical enactment of the legislation thus both relies on and allows for the continuation of certain residual practices and relationships and has generated a new set of informal relationships and systems of accountability. As Leach et al. (1994) observed, "New forms of political management are emerging, with a greater emphasis on informal arrangements for strategy formulation and policy planning. Concomitantly there is less emphasis upon the traditional committee system."

These informal arrangements are also a kind of surrogate accountability. There are examples in place in three of the four main case study authorities; the exception being Northerton, where a traditional councillor/officer/committee system remains virtually intact, although committees and responsibilities are being merged as the authority shrinks in size. Elsewhere, as in Westmoor, for example, the CEO has created a partnership forum through support groups:

> Although we have an education committee, which includes teachers, representatives of governors and parents, and so on, in order to ensure that we are sharpening our support services and providing what schools want and rewriting the portfolio, there was a need for three service support

panels which comprised governors, heads, teachers, officers, and advisers—one for the curriculum area, one for the technical area, and one for the direct support to develop a partnership forum that represented the various interests of the education service who could provide advice to me in what I advise the education committee on all sorts of issues.

Local Systems and "Real" Accountability

These residual practices and new informal relationships may help make things work, but although the 1988 and subsequent acts give to or leave with LEAs certain responsibilities for the servicing, monitoring, and management of local education, they also dissolve the essential notion of the schools of a local authority forming a system. Some respondents argued that such a system was essential to accountability. For example, the chair of governors of an LEA school in Metroland commented,

> Schools belong to systems, and any one school is accountable to the rest . . . of the system . . . this is the education system, and then the system itself is part of society and is accountable to society and for all their faults, and they are considerable; local authorities do have those two features, they do enable schools to be accountable to each other and to be accountable to surrounding society. The grant maintained system doesn't guarantee either.

The dismantling of local systems leaves local officials and councillors with a general sense of unease about being accountable for their stewardship when their powers are so limited. At the heart of this is the uncertain tension between LEA responsibility for the quality of education provided locally and the probity of school administration within their local system, as against the new autonomies available to schools and the powers vested in school governing bodies. There is considerable disquiet about the actual skills, "real" responsibilities, and "real" accountability of school governors. Even the CEO of Metroland, an enthusiast for devolution and school autonomy, had serious concerns about the effectiveness of some governing bodies and the extent to which their paper responsibilities were fulfilled in practice. In many cases, in practice, the LEAs saw headteachers as wielding too much power although, also occasionally, not wielding enough.

> One has to say, sort of in parentheses, . . . governing bodies are highly variable and in a very high proportion; for governing bodies, read "head teacher." I'm not personally comfortable with that, I'm quite critical of that, but that is a fact of life. (CEO, Metroland)

A Conservative councillor in Cwmshire made the same point more specifically in relation to a governing body on which she sat:

> The Head and I are opposed, but I'm the only one who argues or disagrees with him . . . he cares for his school, no one challenges him. The Head is dominant. The Head gets his way re[garding] staff appointments, etc.!

Clearly, there are some key issues about the locus of accountability here. The current education legislation relies on a rather weak and partial legitimation based on the election of parent members to school governing bodies, combined with a stronger but indirect and nonuniform market system of accountability, wherein governors act as boards of directors for "primary or secondary public limited company (plc)." Neither aspect provides visible or quick or reliable methods for holding schools accountable to their local community. Virtually all of our authority-based respondents, irrespective of their political persuasion, thought the distribution of powers between LEAs and schools was now inappropriately skewed. They expressed the need for a local or regional representative education authority of some kind to reestablish a balance in the joint enterprise of educational provision to enable democratic accountability to reassert itself.

> Firstly, the government has chosen to take upon itself all sorts of controls it didn't have in the past; we are a regulated education service and it's governed by regulation because all the legislation we've had has been enabling legislation. It gives the secretary of state the power to determine the content of the national curriculum, the nature of assessment, the scheme of local management. . . . I think it's almost power without responsibility because unless you invoke either a complaint against the LEA for acting unreasonably, in which case the arbiter is either the courts or the secretary of state, or you take the secretary of state to court for making unreasonable regulations. There is no system of accountability and responsibility. (CEO, Westmoor)

The different expressions of culture and practice in the four LEAs in this study—civic provision/community government, civic association/service provision, enterprise association/local management—capture LEAs *in transition*. The overall trend, not surprisingly, given the current legislative framework, is toward the enterprise association/local management. This is recognisable in the educational discourse about decision-making processes at every level of discussion in the study. Dialogue about value stances and principles was far less prevalent than dialogue about issues of efficient services and cost

consciousness. Issues of equity of provision and access are marginalized in this discursive shift, although they remain on the agenda in Northerton.

The key point in all this seems to be not that forms of accountability have changed, although some new forms are now in play, but that the meaning and practice of accountability is now obscured and incoherent. With regard to Simey's bargain or contract, except in some aspects of a narrow consumer-provider exchange, the identity and responsibilities of the provider are unclear. Some school students fall outside of these exchanges, and increasing numbers of parents are unable to enter into the exchanges they want. Some stakeholders can be called to account, others cannot. Some decisions are visible and can be held accountable, others are hidden from public view. "Ad hocery" is considerably increased. Agencies like governing bodies have multiple allegiances and operate within contradictory definitions of their role and have unclear boundaries to their powers and responsibilities. In many cases, these bodies amount to nothing more than minimagistocracies. In many schools, headteachers have inherited almost untrammelled power. In some metropolitan settings, schools are increasingly divorced from their local community. Perhaps most important, it appears that principles of managerial and financial accountability, as epitomised in the relationship between the FAS and the GM schools, are taking precedence over democratic accountability as a principle underpinning educational practice. If democratic accountability is not to be lost sight of in the miasma of current practice, new expressions of democratic practices at the local level need to be found.

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10

The Politics of Accountability in Australian Education

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As in the United States, education is constitutionally a responsibility "reserved" to the states. Nevertheless, its financial dominance has enabled the Australian federal government to actively participate with the states in shaping and funding key policy initiatives in the school and higher education sectors (Boyd & Smart, 1987). Throughout Australia, schooling in government schools is controlled by the various state education departments, headed by a career civil servant, the director-general of education (DG), who is directly responsible to each state's elected minister of education. Historically, centralisation has been a dominant feature of the administration of public education—what Macpherson terms a "command system"—and state departments have, by and large, centrally financed and administered for all schools: staffing, curriculum, planning, buildings, and maintenance. Although this has delivered considerable equity of provision for all government students, it has also led to a uniformity of approach that has, perhaps, counteracted the need for accountability typical of more diverse systems. Similarly, strong teacher unionisation has also reinforced preoccupations with uniformity and equity issues. Powerful state teachers unions have had a significant political role, often forcing bureaucrats and politicians to address their concerns when formulating policy (Boyd & Smart, 1987).

It would be wrong to suggest that the reformist movements of the past 15 years have not had some impact on changing centralised decision making and control of education. Nevertheless, despite more than a decade of widespread restructuring of state education departments—predominantly motivated by reformist notions of school improvement through "school site management"

and "devolution"—the prevailing reality is one of continuing policy domination on the big issues by central education bureaucrats and politicians (Knight, Lingard, Barlett, & Porter, 1995). Indeed, one significant trend has been growing policy steerage by state and federal education ministers—at the expense of senior bureaucrats—a phenomenon referred to in the literature as the "ministerialisation" of education policy (Dudley & Vidovich, 1995) and perhaps paralleled in some respects by the U.S. phenomenon of state "education governors."

Over the past several decades, Australia's seven state education departments and their individual schools have largely succeeded—seemingly to a greater degree than their counterparts in the United States and Britain—in insulating themselves from harsher forms of centralised educational accountability such as state testing and school performance comparisons. Indeed, as the following account of four states' experiences testifies, even where some relatively benign and potentially useful forms of school accountability reviews have been widely trialed or implemented, they seem to have been ultimately thwarted by the very groups—state-level politicians and education bureaucrats—whom the community might have expected to champion and sustain them.

A central goal of this chapter will be to try to explain the politics of this phenomenon, which seem inextricably tied to the peculiarities of Australian federalism and to the historical dominance of education bureaucrats (and ministers) controlling strongly centralised state education departments.

Undoubtedly, part of the explanation rests in the different types of Australian federal-state relations that exist in the different education sectors and the resistance by state authorities to potential federal financial and performance accountability and surveillance (see the Tasmanian case study below). It is instructive, in this respect, that our case study of the politics of accountability in higher education—the only sector where federal influence is dominant and state policy participation is weak (Smart, 1991)—describes the only apparently successful and sustained implementation of accountability processes in an education sector in Australia to date.

The explanations for the "failure" of these four states in the case studies to implement or sustain major statewide school accountability processes will be sought in the role of powerful teachers' unions, changes of government following elections, and, perhaps predominantly, fear by traditionally entrenched senior state education policymakers (primarily DGs and their corporate executives, but also ministers) that accountability processes and outcomes might produce unwanted scrutiny, loss of control, and embarrassment to themselves.

We have chosen to present the four case studies of state departments of school education first and the national case of higher education, which is

qualitatively different (in terms of federal dominance of policy), last. The order in which the state case studies are presented reflects their historical sequence in tackling the thorny issue of accountability and assists both appreciation of the state interactive dimension and also the analysis of political processes at work. It is striking that in three of the four states, significant Scottish expertise and accountability experience was used. Furthermore, in the two most thoroughgoing state attempts at accountability—South Australia (SA) and New South Wales (NSW)—the two key "players" were the same. That is, NSW "head-hunted" the former SA DG, Ken Boston, and his accountability head, Peter Cuttance, following their introduction of a major accountability program in SA.

THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN CASE: THE RETREAT FROM "REAL" TO "SYMBOLIC" ACCOUNTABILITY (1988-1997)

During the decade to 1997, the politics of state school system accountability in SA swung from (a) a centralisation of bureaucratic power in the hierarchical positions of principal, superintendent, and director, which gave minimal accountability; to (b) a form of real accountability based on external review of schools that shared power between school communities and a new centralised accountability structure; to (c) a decentralisation of accountability to schools, which removed external review to the merely "symbolic" realm. That is, ultimately, the central authorities resorted to a reliance on symbols rather than workable substance to produce a veneer of accountability.

Prior to 1989, other than in extreme circumstances, external review of a school was voluntary, principal initiated, and performed by that school's area superintendent. Few reviews took place. At the same time, the gathering of systemic information was rudimentary, and much was filtered through line management hierarchy, a process that reinforced existing power relationships and restricted information. School communities had no part in formal accountability processes.

Government concern about the lack of accountability in education—which constituted around one quarter of the state's total budget—led to the commissioning of a report (Cox, 1987), the outcome of which was the creation of an education review unit (ERU). Peter Cuttance, who had extensive research experience of quality assurance in educational settings in Scotland and Europe, was recruited from Scotland and appointed as its foundation director. His approach to change, released as policy under DG Ken Boston's signature, was revolutionary (Education Department of South Australia [EDSA], 1990). Although judged retrospectively as educationally sound

(Caust, 1994; Cuttance, 1994; Davis, 1994; Monks & Ince, 1993), the ERU and its work challenged past practices and the power relationships among interest groups in those practices in the following domains:

- The creation of a central educational review unit, staffed by specialist review superintendents and secondees from schools, whose reporting bypassed area superintendents and their regional directors
- An arm's-length process of collaborative external team review that included parents but excluded the superintendent responsible for the school under review
- An extension of external review beyond schools to the previously sacrosanct territories of central directorates, policy units, and area offices
- The systematic collection, collation, and reporting of potentially sensitive information that bypassed the normal political filters of area superintendent and regional director

A full cycle of review of SA's 680 state schools occurred from mid-1989 to late 1993. Notwithstanding positive reports on the work of the ERU in building community collaboration, empowering parents, and fostering shared good practice and school development (Davis, 1994; Monks & Ince, 1993), a change in the state's elected government placed the accountability initiatives of the previous government under particular scrutiny. A functional review team was created to scrutinise such projects.

The sudden public announcement by the new conservative government (April 1994) of its decision to close the ERU and curtail and recast its functions suggests prejudgment, for it caught the unprepared functional review team still in the process of gathering the "evidence" at the ERU offices! The much weaker replacement quality assurance unit (QAU) had a staff slashed by 75% and an external review role that excluded visiting schools. Although the government's stated reason for change was cost cutting, this appeared to mask contributing political influences exposed through the work of the ERU.

The creation of the ERU had restricted the access to information, particularly in its formative stages, of corporate area superintendents and regional directors. This restricted their influence on schools and on policy formation. Naturally, therefore, when the time came, they were unlikely to lobby for the retention of an ERU under threat.

The minister and the DG were anxious about the potentially embarrassing issue of dealing with more open, sensitive, and reliable information gathered through ERU teams. For example, its reviews of equal opportunity and social

justice issues had highlighted gaps in provision as well as pointing to individual cases of excellent practice (Caust, 1994). Yet there was no evidence of increased funding to address these gaps during the 4 years of the review program or during the 2 years after the program ended in 1994. Such information implied the need for additional funding and had the potential to embarrass government, particularly if it was reported out of context by the press, as occurred in January 1994. It is hardly surprising then, that the charter of the ERU's successor, the QAU, precluded the gathering of such embarrassing information!

Summary

The current (1997) quality assurance framework in SA schools (EDSA, 1995) has reduced external validation of internal school processes to the merely symbolic. Schools are now responsible for producing an annual report to the school council on their effectiveness in addressing issues prioritised at the start of the year. A computer disc of that report is sent to the QAU, and that constitutes external validation.

Such a system relies heavily on the honesty of a school's or unit's reporting. Although parents have retained a role in QA processes, the quality of system reporting appears to have been reduced as a conscious process that will minimise the potential for criticism. At the same time, power has been restored to area superintendents, their regional directors, the heads of support units, and principals. The latter have an added capacity to foster or discourage the involvement of parents in school accountability processes.

THE NSW CASE: UNION AND BUREAUCRATIC INTRANSIGENCE STALL A PROMISING START (1992–1996)

In 1992, the NSW Department of School Education's (DSE) new DG, Ken Boston, established a quality assurance system to review schools and evaluate systemic programs. The task of the school reviews was to provide a basis for public accountability and make a substantial input to school improvement plans.

Cuttance was appointed head of the newly established Quality Assurance Directorate at the level of assistant-director general. This established the position as one with authority and status equal in rank to the heads of each of the 10 regions and with a seat on the department's most senior policy and management committee—known as the State Executive Committee.

Cuttance Builds a Supportive Coalition and Negotiated Methodology for School Review

A 6-month development and implementation strategy focused on discussions and negotiations with the school community. During this period, more than 100 meetings were held with groups from all sections of the school community in many different locations across the state.

The Council of the NSW Teachers Federation initially placed bans on the introduction of the review programme before it had been introduced. However, at its subsequent meeting, following assurances from Cuttance that this was not a restoration of the hated Inspectors of Schools system but a collaborative process, the Teachers Federation removed its ban and indicated that it would take a watching brief on developments. More than 300 of the 2,200 schools in the system volunteered to participate in the trial review programme.

There were very few problems or complaints about any aspect of the 30-school trial review processes. The parent community was favourably disposed toward this style of accountability for schools, and school staff generally felt that it assisted them in their aims to improve school performance. The reviews had the positive effect of strengthening the linkage between schools and their communities.

In addition to the school review program, a number of evaluations of systemwide programs that, implicitly, assessed the effectiveness of the DSE's central administration were undertaken. The evaluation reports and systemwide syntheses of key issues were provided for the DG and the State Executive Committee. However, the overall response of management to the majority of these reports was largely to ignore them. The DSE had given an undertaking to make the findings of the reviews and evaluations public, but this was only done for the findings from the reviews of individual schools. Although the reports from the evaluations of systemic policies and programmes were sometimes harshly critical of corporate performance and contained significant recommendations for the improvement of the delivery of education to students, few of these resulted in action.

Various devices were deployed by the central bureaucracy to reduce the potential impact of the evaluations of systemic programs, such as preparing a synopsis for broader distribution but not allowing access to the full report by others, allowing the reports to be buried by organisational restructuring processes, and occasionally directly suppressing them. The result was that few of the reports made a significant impact on raising awareness of central system failings and areas in need of urgent rejuvenation. The primary conclusion to be drawn is that the minimum requirement for such systems to successfully affect centralised bureaucracies is that they be established with

independent authority to evaluate, to review, and to publish within the confines of appropriate professional standards.

Election of a Tough "League Table" Government Triggers Union and Bureaucratic Resistance

In March 1994, there was a change of government in NSW. The incoming Labour government had promised public reports on student test and examination results for each school as a way of making a "statement" that it would be tough on schools and educational standards. The Teachers Federation promptly banned both the school review programme and participation in the development of the new public reports. The DSE entered another phase of restructuring and, in the process, withdrew funds from the quality assurance review program and reassigned most staff to other duties.

The future path to the reestablishment of a system of accountability for government schools in NSW is uncertain, although it is likely that a system of school performance reports will be introduced in one form or another. Although these will provide some basis for accountability at the school level, the fundamental lack of any formal system for performance accountability at the system level will be unchanged. This situation will remain unchanged until such time as standards of performance for students at the various stages of their schooling are established and there is a requirement through legislation to publicly report on the performance of various subgroups of students and the system as a whole.

Summary

The early years of the 1990s saw a marked interest in greater accountability in government school systems in Australia. This was driven largely by a heightened emphasis on the achievement of the strategic objectives of educational policies. The programme of systemic and school review and evaluation developed in the NSW system represented a high-profile attempt to monitor progress toward the achievement of policy objectives and improved performance. A key element of the programme was to be its explicit involvement of stakeholder groups and the public reporting of findings.

The programme overcame initial resistance in schools and from the union, eventually gaining widespread professional support among these groups. However, it never managed to overcome the self-interest of the bureaucracy. The potential of the review programme to provide information that was critical of the performance of the bureaucracy resulted in continuous attempts to destabilise the programme. Where reviews and evaluations were completed, formal and informal processes were employed to ensure that the reports were suppressed from public purview. Furthermore, little use was made of the

substantial and highly relevant findings from the review programme in responses by the bureaucracy to problems or areas of policy in need of attention.

These features of bureaucratic resistance and emasculation of the processes of accountability as they relate to the performance of the bureaucracy were also evident in the previous case study from SA, and they are mirrored in the next case study from Western Australia (WA).

THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN CASE: ACCOUNTABILITY AS THE POLITICS OF CONTROL (1991–1997)

The Setting

There is a long tradition in the State Education Department of Western Australia (EDWA) of strong centralist control through a corporate executive of senior officers led by a DG answerable to parliament through a minister. District superintendents responsible for the accountability of schools are answerable to members of the corporate executive. This is a classic "command system" in Macpherson's terms (see Tasmanian case study).

The past decade has also been one of unprecedented instability in the most senior positions. During that period, five different ministers (representing two political parties and one change of government), and four DGs and four acting DGs have occupied "the helm." Each incoming DG has restructured his or her corporate executive. This restructuring has tended to change positions rather than people and has consolidated the influence of those at this senior hierarchical level who are members of a five- to seven-person corporate executive that controls system policy. In addition, between 1986 and 1988 and again in 1997, the powerful intermediate level of corporate control and accountability—the superintendency—was largely demolished and its nature changed.

In 1987, a reformist Labour government education minister, Bob Pearce, launched Better Schools, a programme to give schools greater autonomy—professional and budgetary—from a "command" bureaucracy (Smart & Wilson, 1991). Political manoeuvre in the 1990s has been set in this context of devolution to schools of the means of achieving educational ends while simultaneously strengthening political control (by the corporate executive of EDWA) of accountability. Control has been exercised through superintendents under the direction of a corporate executive answerable to the DG. At differing times, the Teachers' Union, professional associations, and in one case, the minister, have attempted to apply influence to redistribute power by weakening the grip of the strong central EDWA bureaucracy.

The Union

The State School Teachers' Union (the Union) is strong, aggressive, equally bureaucratic and centralist, and represents the interests of the majority of teachers in state schools. It has been extremely resistant to changes in working conditions, and accountability requirements have been part of that suite of conditions. Strikes were staged over these issues in 1989, 1993, and 1995.

To gain time and to dampen a very heated public debate about progress on, and the virtues of, the now 6-years-old Better Schools programme implementation, the conservative education minister, Norman Moore, announced in 1993 the appointment of the Ministerial Independent Assessment Group on Devolution under the chairmanship of Dr. N. Hoffman, a retired senior education bureaucrat. The Hoffman Committee met over 16 months, gathered a wide range of evidence, and reported in December 1994. The committee membership comprised ministerial nominees rather than representatives of interest groups and was regarded with some suspicion by the Union. For example, it included the immediate past president of the Union, who had lost that post in a rather acrimonious election, rather than the current incumbent, or the Union's nominee. Six of the report's 25 recommendations concerned accountability, the most contentious of which are about the establishment of an external review unit.

There was massive industrial disruption to state schools in 1995 that incorporated rolling strikes and a statewide strike. The Union banned attendance at, or involvement in, any EDWA accountability processes. At the same time, EDWA's policy papers on accountability appeared to deny any disputation, and hence any impact on the operations of schools. The 1996 and 1997 bans have had mixed influence on schools, but they appear to be more a nuisance than a barrier to effective control of accountability policy and practice by the corporate executive of EDWA.

Principals Support and Central Bureaucrats Resist External Review Model

Both the primary and secondary principals' professional associations were concerned about a lack of accountability policy clarity and support, and both were concerned about ongoing industrial disputation and disruption in their schools. Until 1995, the majority of both groups were members of the Union, but almost all signed enterprise agreements with EDWA late that year in return for a 20% pay rise. Their agreement included implementation of all EDWA accountability policies. This seriously weakened the position of the Union and strengthened that of EDWA.

The secondary principals' association had commissioned its own report in 1994 to provide a research-based submission to the Hoffman review. This submission had a major chapter on accountability policy. It caused a furor among EDWA corporate executive and among superintendents, as analysis of the research data led to a challenging of the accountability role of district superintendents and of central support of accountability processes to date. Similar dissent by superintendents occurred in SA in 1989 when their jobs appeared threatened by changed quality assurance processes. The principals were in favour of external review by a mix of specialist superintendents and school-based personnel, as had occurred in SA and NSW. However, EDWA's centralist corporate executive stalled that thrust initially by isolating the principals, then establishing a committee that met for 8 months before having its report suppressed. Subsequently, however, many of that report's recommendations were used as foundations for what has now become current accountability policy under the clear authorship of senior central bureaucrats.

Minister Favours Independent External Review but Is Moved to a New Ministry

Following a 1994 meeting with Nisbet Gallacher, Her Majesty's Inspectorate chief inspector of schools in Scotland, the WA minister saw advantages in the Scottish model of independent external review (which was the basis of the modified external review processes developed by Cuttance in SA and NSW). This was similar to a model proposed by secondary principals and fought off by superintendents and the corporate executive in 1994.

The Hoffman (1994) review recommended the establishment of such a unit but was unable to decide whether it should report to the minister or the DG and left the issue open. The minister responded by inviting Gallacher to visit WA in February 1995 to carry out an independent review of quality assurance (accountability) arrangements in the state system. Although the Gallacher (1995) report has not been released into the public domain, it was circulated within EDWA's corporate executive. Among its recommendations (pp. 8, 9) was the establishment of an independent review unit that reported directly to the minister, bypassing senior levels of the state education bureaucracy. Such a line of accountability would seriously undermine control of current accountability processes by EDWA executives and would have the potential to bring into the public domain the sorts of issues that led to the emasculation of the ERU in SA in 1994.

Between March and December 1995, the minister and DG were fully occupied in managing a deteriorating, very public industrial situation. The DG resigned in December, and the minister was moved to the cabinet post of Tourism prior to the start of the new school year.

Central Bureaucrats "Win" Again—New Minister Not Interested in External Review

In late 1995, the corporate executive sponsored a detailed accountability policy, incorporating Gallacher's recommendations, other than those applying to an independent review unit, key ideas from the suppressed report of the work of secondary principals and senior officers, and a review of accountability policies elsewhere. The defence of turf is a clear explanation for the development of such a policy concurrent with an industrial situation that led to the removal of both the DG and the minister.

Neither the new minister nor the new DG has shown any inclination to create an external review unit. Furthermore, after an initial "honeymoon" period with the Union in 1996, the new minister now finds himself with yet another Union ban on implementing accountability processes—in the context of a salary bargaining process.

Summary

This case highlights central bureaucratic political manoeuvre to develop an established set of accountability relationships in the face of pressure from other interest groups. In WA, both the Union and principals' professional organisations have strongly challenged the centre's accountability agenda. Once the centre successfully enticed the principals out of the Union by hefty financial rewards, the principals accepted the legitimacy of accountability but not the centralist model. Meanwhile, the Union remains largely unconvinced of the merits of accountability but continues to use it as a bargaining chip in salary negotiations.

THE CASE OF TASMANIA: WILL CENTRALIST ACCOUNTABILITY PREVAIL, OR CAN NEOPLURALIST FORMS EMERGE?

Accountability as Derivative and Symbolic Politics

The politics of accountability in the Tasmanian state education system have tended to be derived from the politics of fiscal constraint and control in local, state, and national settings (Macpherson, 1992). The rolling reforms of educational administration between July 1982 and May 1989, for example, reflected the phenomenon of ministerialisation—state and national politicians determined to personally "drive" corporate management processes across all portfolios to generate efficiencies and demonstrate greater effectiveness (Government of Tasmania, 1981, 1982). For example, watershed curriculum development documents in Tasmania, such as *Secondary Education and the Future* (Government of Tasmania, Department of Education and

the Arts [DEA], 1984),[1] had sections written personally by the minister of education, Peter Rae. The drive toward professional collegialism and greater economies in "self-managing" schools (Caldwell & Spinks, 1988) was steered carefully by a highly centralised or "command" political system. There has never been a significant shift of control to public school communities in Tasmania.

The command system clearly has automatic survival mechanisms. As the resources available to public education and the legitimacy of services began to fall again toward the end of the 1980s, political pressures for the introduction of accountability policies rose. During financial negotiations between the state and federal governments, state officials were forced by the federal government to consider the introduction of performance indicators. The states successfully argued that performance indicators would be less threatening and more effective if developed in a context of teaching program evaluation, planning, and decision making in schools (Hocking & Langford, 1990).

A New Government Obsessed With Financial "Cuts"

Ironically, the saliency of educational accountability as a political issue faded when the Tasmanian Liberal government fell, in financial disarray, at the May 1989 election. A fragile new Labour-Green coalition government, fearful of insolvency, commissioned a private consultancy, Cresap Ltd., to find $18 million education savings for the 1990-1991 year. *Cresap's Final Report* (Cresap, 1990, p. 26) cut schools' staffs by about 10%, devolved many administrative functions to schools, replaced all regional personnel with lean district offices, and then downscaled systemic planning, professional development, and curriculum capacities. As a result, many traditional education accountability structures collapsed—until 1992, when they were reconstructed.

Accountability 1: Staff Appraisal Is Born and Dies

The Tasmanian Industrial Commission's salaries determination in August 1990 used national award restructuring policy to make a new staff appraisal system a condition for a pay rise. The response was immediate. The *Policy Statement: Staff Appraisal* (DEA, 1991a) was negotiated and phased in from 1 January 1992. It was to review and improve (a) teaching practices and (b) administrative and leadership services related to the quality of learning. All professionals were to be appraised every 4 years, to nominate an "appraiser," "critical friend," or "mentor" (p. 3), to negotiate processes and criteria, and to document conclusions. The DEA was to provide training, and schools were to report progress by the end of 1996.

Having locked in the pay rise, the DEA and the teachers' union then let the scheme die by a thousand cuts. Even though some schools developed effective schemes, implementation was allowed to run down. Data on criteria,

processes, and outcomes never appeared in the public domain. By the mid-1990s, the staff appraisal scheme was no more than a symbolic policy and considered socially inadmissible in systemic policy discussions.

Accountability 2: Site Management via Compulsory School Councils

Another accountability initiative in the early 1990s suffered a similar fate. Minister Patmore's tough decisions in search of economies in education created so much controversy that his Green partners demanded a sacrificial lamb to placate the electorate. Although Patmore then moved to another portfolio in 1991, and the Labour-Green Accord survived, one of his initiatives, *School and College Councils: Interim Guidelines* (DEA, 1991b) also survived. It was published by his replacement, Michael Aird, and intoned that "government requires that every school and college establish a council." These school councils were intended to broaden participation in school decision making and policy making. They were to develop a school charter, to approve the school development plan, to approve resource allocations, and to review the school's charter and policies. Although the new policy (DEA, 1991b) was proclaimed as a substantial devolution of governance powers, its actual lines of accountability guaranteed central control and political confusion on school councils.

To this point, in the early 1990s, the politics of accountability in Tasmania were mainly derivative and symbolic. They were derived from the interplay between state and national agencies primarily concerned with fiscal reduction agendas. They overlaid the economic decisions reached in these policy domains with largely symbolic accountability jargon.

Apart from the "token" bureaucratic control mechanisms, neither professionals nor stakeholders negotiated or were held accountable for the quality of educational services.

However, from 1992 onward, a neopluralist form of politics was developed by the DEA. That is, for perhaps the first time, they appeared to accept that in addition to the formal machinery of government, public policy was to be steered by a range of legitimate school and community groups that might exert influence (Dunleavy & O'Leary, 1987, pp. 329-341). Alongside an elaboration of state bureaucratic controls, there was an attempt to involve legitimate stakeholders in accountability policy research.

The Command System Reasserted: Accountability by Central Prescription

Tasmania lost faith in the Labour-Green Accord in February 1992 and elected a Liberal (conservative) government committed to further cost cutting and corporate managerialism. Many ministries were immediately downscaled. However, in sharp contrast, the incoming minister for education and

Deputy Premier, John Beswick, largely spared education. Nevertheless, his departmental bureaucracy quickly reasserted its former command system and began to "prescribe" accountability measures.

The new *Accountability Policy for the Division of Education* (DEA, 1993a) directed all schools to establish processes of accountability that applied sound planning, resource management, monitoring, reviewing, and reporting practices. They were to integrate two criteria: "the best possible education for all students with the most effective and efficient use of resources." This explicitly centralist policy was to ensure that "coherent, consistent and realistic policies and practices are applied across the system" (p. 3).

In practice, principals had to implement four highly prescriptive policies: *Local School Leadership and Management* (DEA, 1993c), *School Planning 1994* (DEA, 1993d), *School Resource Package* (DEA, 1993e), and the *Framework for Curriculum Provision K-12* (DEA, 1993b). School personnel were to consult with district superintendents whenever interpretation was required. *Local School Leadership and Management* (DEA, 1993c) set the tone:

> If evaluation is for Central level, system-wide performance indicators will be used; each school should determine its own . . . [and] . . . indicators for performance need to be established for inputs, processes and outcomes . . . [however] . . . if a school fails consistently to produce outcomes which are commensurate with Central and local goals and priorities, the District will intervene in the management process. (p. 8)

This command system marginalised all other stakeholders in accountability policy making and operations. They were only allowed to read and approve their "School Charter," a statement of vision and intent; the "Long-Term Plan," a projection of priorities, activities, and schedules; the "Short-Term Plan" of programmes and objectives; and the "Annual Report" sent to the District Office. They were consulted on occasion, but political participation remained closed. The few exceptions proved instructive.

The Minister Rejects School-Based Accountability

Beswick commissioned an independent policy advisory reference group, the Tasmanian Education Council (TEC), to advise on parents' opinions on reporting practices in schools. The Government of Tasmania, TEC (1993) found that parents wanted accurate information on curriculum content; comparative benchmarks; expected learning outcomes; their child's academic progress; their child's attitude, behaviour, social skills, and their strengths and weaknesses; and how they as parents could help their child learn. They recommended parent education in the area of criterion-based assessment, clearer educational goals and operational guidelines, and accountability

procedures for schools that were both flexible and effective. The Government of Tasmania, TEC (1993) warned the minister rather bluntly:

> If mechanisms such as this are going to work, they need to be under control of, and accountable to, a school-based authority. We believe that the best way for this to happen is through school councils. Therefore the Council is concerned that, in the proposed new Education Act, schools councils have not been made compulsory. (p. 10)

The TEC's Findings and Recommendations Were Buried

Despite the strong advice from the TEC, when the *Interim Guidelines for School and College Councils* (DEA, 1995) were released, school councils remained optional and were not given a serious role in accountability. The guidelines insisted that school councils adhere to determinations made by the Secretary of the DEA on all matters relating to discipline, curriculum, teaching practice, homework, assessment, and reporting.

This policy confirmed the gross imbalance of power between school community stakeholders and the DEA. It effectively made school councils no more than symbolic democratic structures. In effect, principals had an informal veto on the establishment, continued existence, responsibilities, and operation of their school council. More broadly, the 1994 and still current legislation appeared to undercut the public legitimacy of school councils and retarded the broader evolution of local governance capacities in Tasmanian public education. As the political risks mounted, a number of communitarian initiatives began to ease the pressure.

An Emerging Neopluralist Politics of Accommodation?

Despite the prevailing milieu of command politics, a number of school councils have flourished with the support of reform-minded officials, principals, and communities. The new minister and Deputy Premier, Mrs. Sue Napier, established an ERU to report outcomes directly to the Secretary, that is, independently of the school and system line managers. She then defended this parallel structure against a campaign by the central bureaucrats.

Ironically, these same system personnel commissioned policy research as early as 1992 into educative forms of accountability. This research essentially confirmed that the command system was using an obsolete political perspective to justify its accountability policies (Macpherson, 1996, p. 322). The research found that practitioners and parents favoured a much more local school and decentralised form of accountability than either the minister or his bureaucrats were prepared to concede—ironically and predictably, just

the kind of accountability systems that SA and NSW had laid the foundations for until the centrists got "cold feet"!

It is these developments that have led Macpherson (1996) to conclude that Tasmania may finally be witnessing the emergence of a neopluralist politics of accountability that can accommodate growing degrees of community involvement. Although the command structures still "technically" marginalise all but line managers and steer self-managing schools, political privileges are being dispensed whereby some community stakeholders in some settings are permitted a considerable degree of policy steerage and accountability. Macpherson (1996) believes that this is evidence that "there is a deep secular trend in Tasmanian public education from individualism through collegialism towards communitarianism among stakeholders."

CASE STUDY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION: HE WHO PAYS THE PIPER CALLS THE TUNE (1993-1997)

In 1973, the federal government, which had previously shared the funding of higher education with state governments, assumed total funding responsibility (Harman & Smart, 1982). This has given the federal government enormous leverage on universities, and it has increasingly used it over the past decade to impose new accountability measures. These new measures include various statistical data and other information reporting requirements; increased "school leaver enrollment targets" to be met annually; and requirements for institutions to initiate various detailed plans, including a research management plan, an equity plan, and an aboriginal student strategy.

In addition, from 1993 to 1997, the successive federal governments of opposite political line have imposed and implemented quality assurance programs that have gone further than many of the quality assurance programs seen in Australian schools and certainly further than many of the quality assurance programs introduced for higher education sectors in other Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries (Craft, 1994; Harman, 1996; Kells, 1992). This has been achieved as a result of Commonwealth financial carrots and sticks despite considerable resentment by the institutions.

Like recent higher education quality assurance programs in a number of other countries, the Australian program has been based on annual academic audits of participating institutions. But it also included publication of the detailed annual audit reports on each institution, publicised national rankings of institutions, and an important element of performance funding, with additional funds coming from a special government allocation.

Until 1993, the higher education sector largely employed a traditional British approach to quality assurance, with most responsibility being on universities, which tended to use informal processes without a substantial element of reporting or documentation. Throughout the 1980s, however, the government became increasing concerned about quality, especially following the abolition of the binary system—as a result of which 19 universities and 46 colleges were transformed into 35 universities (the Unified National System)—and a very considerable increase in student enrollments (Dudley & Vidovich, 1995). Various new mechanisms were introduced, such as discipline reviews, but it was still considered that stronger mechanisms were required. In a detailed report to the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission in the mid-1980s, Bourke (1986) concluded that "with the exception of certain areas, Australian universities have yet to perfect in their own walls that culture of evaluation and self-assessment, especially at the department level, which is an integral part of any professional activity" (p. 20).

At first, the universities were opposed to the introduction of any additional quality assurance measures, but in the end, with the federal carrot of additional funding, they agreed to give their support. Among the vice-chancellors of the larger metropolitan universities was a strong expectation that they achieve high rankings and so regain some of the operating grant funding that they had lost in the late 1980s in a number of annual "clawbacks" to fund the Australian Research Council and restructuring projects in the sector.

University Quality Audits

Various options were considered, but after extensive consultations within the sector conducted by the national Higher Education Council, it was agreed to use an academic audit, but combined with rankings and performance funding. The audit focused on both quality assurance processes and quality outcomes and involved

- a self-evaluation and preparation of a detailed portfolio by each participating university,
- peer review by visiting review panels made up of persons from the higher education sector with some industry representation, and
- analysis of statistical data made available by the Federal Department of Employment, Education and Training.

The program was under the control of a committee (the Wilson Committee) responsible to the minister and made up of a combination of senior persons drawn from universities, government agencies, and industry, but with a university vice-chancellor as chair. Although the program was based on

voluntary participation, in fact, in each year, all public universities took part. They were desperate for the federal carrots proffered.

The Quality Assurance Guidelines

In July 1993, the Wilson Committee published federal government guidelines and its own detailed procedures, and invited universities to participate in the 1993 review. Universities participating in the process, and being able to demonstrate effective quality assurance policies and practices, were told that they would share in a sum of A$84 million—money that was "clawed back" from the overall operating budget for the system. In other words, universities needed to participate in the hope of competitively winning back money that was really theirs in the first place. Although the guidelines followed the key recommendations of the Higher Education Council, they departed from the original plan in one most important respect by stating that the reviews would focus on quality outcomes as well as on quality assurance processes. This gave a decided advantage to major, well-established institutions at the expense of newer and smaller institutions. For 1993, the committee stated that it would undertake an overview study of institutional quality assurance policies and practices, whereas for 1994, the emphasis would be on teaching and learning, and for 1995, on the management and integration of research and community service activities. The guidelines also stated:

- about half of the eligible institutions may gain a share of the funds;
- the maximum grant the Committee can recommend is equivalent to five per cent of an institution's operating grant;
- institutions which receive these additional funds will be those which are able to demonstrate effective quality assurance policies and practices, and excellent outcomes; and
- institutions will be expected to expend the funds in a way which addresses the maintenance and enhancement of quality, particularly in the institution's areas of strength. (Committee for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, 1993, p. 7)

By far the most controversial aspect of the "competition" for the three rounds—a process that was as much about slick presentation and marketing as about reality—was the ranking of institutions into different groups or bands and the allocation of funding on the basis of this ranking. For the first round, institutions were placed in six different bands, with the top group receiving the highest level of funding per student unit. The results were widely reported in the national media, both in Australia and nearby Asian countries. Universities that were placed in the top bands found that this

increased their community prestige, whereas institutions in the lowest bands considered that this had a very damaging effect on their reputation and standing with both employers and prospective students. Significantly, all six institutions placed in the top group were well-established major universities located in state capital cities or the national capital, whereas all institutions in the bottom category were relatively small, new universities.

Following the Research Quality Review in 1995, the Wilson Committee cited its beneficial effects:

> All universities have research management plans and/or strategies to guide their activities with clear objectives and targets for research development. Many have moved to provide incentives to departments or schools by incorporating research performance factors, as well as student numbers, in their basic operating funding formulas. Most institutions have targeted increased numbers of research postgraduate students in their profiles providing pressure for revision of policies and greater codification of supervisory practices. Finally, many institutions are benchmarking their research and postgraduate practices with those of comparator institutions in Australia and overseas seeking "good practice." (Committee for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, 1995, p. 25)

Whether they are supportive of this accountability process or not, there is no doubt that universities have felt obliged to participate. It is a classic illustration of the dramatic power of the federal dollar (constituting 60% to 70% of total university income) to force cash-strapped universities to address accountability issues. Despite some cynicism about federal tactics, most observers would tend to agree that the effects on universities have been substantial, leading particularly to a more serious approach to evaluation and quality assurance, to a new emphasis on assessment of outputs and client satisfaction, and to more serious attempts at achieving integrated strategic planning linked to annual budgeting.

Thus, in the university sector, a dominant federal government with no need to consult state governments or other interest groups successfully imposed and implemented accountability measures in a way that was impossible for the states to emulate in the school sector with their powerful vested interest groups.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS FROM THE CASE STUDIES

Undoubtedly, one of the strongest conclusions to emerge from the four state case studies is that the peculiar 1990s constellation of political circumstances surrounding state education systems—state departmental restructuring/"devolution," financial cutbacks, pressures for greater school and system

accountability, teachers threatened by rapid change and appraisal processes, and increased ministerialisation of policy—has made for a very volatile and unstable policy environment generally, and in relation to accountability policy in particular.

Perhaps this was most evident in the way in which each change of state government (and they were frequent) almost inevitably was followed by a marked change in accountability policies—policies that to be implemented properly and to function effectively, probably required reasonably long periods of stable and consistent operation to permit stakeholder understanding and confidence.

It is striking that in all four states, changes of government, changes of education minister within the same government, or both were sufficient to redirect or reverse recently established accountability policy. In the classic cases of SA and NSW, Cuttance laboured vigorously over several years to build multiple stakeholder confidence and understanding of Scottish-style external review accountability processes for schools—only to find changes in government (as a result of elections) bring an abrupt end to his programs. Nevertheless, it is probably too simplistic to blame the collapse of these two accountability schemes solely on the changed political complexion of government—for in each case there was clear evidence of latent central bureaucratic resistance for which the change of government became a catalyst or justification to kill the offending accountability program.

In each of the four cases, there is clear evidence of the bureaucratic imperative for power—whether it was to retain or regain—and a clear reluctance for bureaucrats themselves to be evaluated or scrutinised, carrying as it might the risk of embarrassment or reduction in control and/or authority. This was perhaps nowhere clearer than in NSW, SA, and WA, where the corporate executive deliberately stalled or frustrated efforts for increased system-level accountability, although they were not averse to school reviews.

Again, we saw both the professional and political elements of the teachers' unions at play in the battles for control over the accountability agenda. In NSW, in particular, the teachers were initially persuaded by Cuttance to drop their bans on participation in the External School Review pilot program—and they participated profitably and professionally—only to retreat once more from collaboration in the face of a new "macho" government that had campaigned for election on the platform of "getting tough with the schools." In WA, on the other hand, the Union has remained intransigently opposed to school reviews but perhaps more as a bargaining chip over improved salaries and conditions. School principals, to the contrary, abandoned the Union and embraced school reviews for a 20% salary hike.

Perhaps Cuttance is correct—he should know, having seen his accountability "baby" subverted twice—when he asserts that the only way to avert

bureaucratic (and, one assumes, union) sabotage and infighting is to establish accountability bodies with legislatively guaranteed authority to evaluate, to review, and to publicly report "within the confines of appropriate professional standards." That is, the review bodies need to be external to, and independent of, the state departments of education.

We might ask if there is something qualitatively different about the peculiar Australian blend of fiscal federalism and state education traditions of centralised administration and strong teacher unions that makes bureaucratic self-preservation and system sabotage more widespread and insidious than in systems such as the United States, with its strong traditions of local control. The emergence of communitarian accountability in Tasmania offers a glimmer of hope.

Finally, it is interesting to note the sharp contrast in implementation success between the school and university sectors. Only in the higher education sector—with its unique system of more or less unitary (federal government) control and finance—have relatively successful accountability processes been implemented. This has been achieved largely through the fairly blunt instrument of federal financial bludgeon. In fairness to the states, it should be acknowledged that there is much greater political complexity in the school sector that constrains successful policy implementation. In that sector, the teachers' unions and principals are powerful players (unlike the academic union), and there are often additional tensions between the minister and his strong centralised bureaucracy. To further complicate matters, federal-state rivalries over school finance and control routinely bedevil discussions of accountability measures such as performance indicators or national curriculum frameworks.

NOTE

1. All further references to the Government of Tasmania, Department of Education and the Arts will be cited in the text as DEA. In the reference list, these references are listed under the Government of Tasmania, Department of Education and the Arts.

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11

The Micropolitics of Accountability

The Case of Staff Appraisal

HELEN S. TIMPERLEY
and VIVIANE M. J. ROBINSON

The New Zealand government, when introducing radical reforms to educational administration in 1989, was committed to making the education sector more accountable and more responsive to stakeholders (Lange, 1988; Macpherson, 1989; Peel & Inkson, 1993). The quality of teachers was of particular concern, and management of their performance became a mandated responsibility of the board of trustees, the new governance body of each school. Recent surveys of school principals (Timperley & Robinson, 1996) and in-depth case studies (Robinson, Timperley, & Halliday, 1996) indicate that the micropolitics of many schools have resulted in appraisal systems that emphasise professional development rather than accountability to the local community or government agencies. These research data indicate that renewed attempts to mandate more accountable systems (Fancy, 1997) are likely to meet with a mixed reception and inconsistent adoption.

The preamble to the new performance management regulations articulates the requirement for school boards to have a system that includes a "process for assessing the performance of teachers, devised in consultation with those teachers" (Fancy, 1997, p. 1). The prescription itself requires schools to appraise staff in areas that relate to their key professional responsibilities at least once a year within a minimum quality assurance and accountability framework. Strong emphasis is also given to professional development.

We predict the selective and incomplete implementation of this new policy because it requires a shift from a predominantly professional form of accountability to a more democratic form, and the tension between the two is neither identified nor addressed in the new policy. First, we lay the conceptual ground for our argument by explaining these different forms of

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accountability and the tension between them. Second, we present survey and case study data to demonstrate the prevalence of a weak version of professional accountability in New Zealand schools, and the nature of the micropolitics that sustains these practices. Third, we briefly discuss the type of intervention that would be required to achieve a better mix of democratic and professional values in the performance management practices of New Zealand schools.

Kogan (1986) defines accountability as "a condition in which individual role holders are liable to review" (p. 25). When applied to the school situation, this definition is inclusive of accountability to peers, school leaders and managers, and to nonprofessional interests such as the local community and government agencies. We need to distinguish between these various possible reviewers because they reflect competing views about the source of legitimate authority over teachers, and it is these distinctions that are central to our argument. The distinctions we will make are based on Ken Strike's (1990) description of models of legitimate authority over the evaluation of teachers, each of which has different implications for their appraisal.

The demand of the new performance management policy that school boards develop, implement, and monitor a system of staff appraisal reflects the government's desire that the quality of education, as a public good, be subject to greater democratic control. Strike (1990) identified two types of democratic control. Bureaucratic democracy, closely identified with legislative control, allows for education policy to be made by one or more elected bodies. It is exercised in New Zealand through centrally promulgated curricular and assessment frameworks against which teachers are to be held accountable, and in the operation of the Education Review Office, a statutory body established in 1989 to investigate and report on education in schools and early childhood centres.

The second type, communitarian democracy (Strike, 1990), allows for high levels of participation in decision making by those most directly affected by those decisions. In education, this would include teachers, parents, and students. Since 1989, communitarian democracy has been given greater emphasis as a source of legitimate authority in New Zealand education. Each school is governed by locally elected boards of trustees, which comprise a majority of parents, the school principal, teacher and student representatives, and co-opted members. Boards are required to be responsive to their communities through consultative and reporting processes (New Zealand Government, 1989). The balance between the two sources of democratic control is struck by asking schools to be accountable to both their local community and to state bureaucracies such as the Education Review Office.

In tension with these democratic sources of control is professionalism, in which teachers are regarded as a self-regulating and self-disciplined body of

professionals who are collectively responsible for assessing the quality of their own practice (Forsyth & Danisiewicz, 1985). Within this model, teachers are accountable to peers, and the role of school management is to support teachers and provide resources to meet their developmental needs (Clark & Meloy, 1990; Firestone & Bader, 1992). According to Strike (1990), this definition of professionalism is undemocratic because it legitimates teacher expertise rather than democracy as the source of authority for public schooling. We agree with Strike that although teachers must have sufficient operational autonomy to undertake their role, the tension between democratic control and professionalism should not be resolved by ignoring accountability to legitimate democratic authorities. School managers should exercise sufficient hierarchical control to enable them to report relevant information on the quality of teaching and learning in the school to community and state agencies.

Performance appraisal systems in most New Zealand schools reflect professional rather than democratic forms of accountability. As we shall show, the preferred models involve teachers being accountable to their peers only, with managers either being excluded from the appraisal process or being cast in the role of facilitators of teacher development toward self-chosen goals. These preferred systems leave managers unable to report on the quality of teaching to democratic authorities. Teachers fear the loss of autonomy that comes with increased involvement of external stakeholders or managers in evaluating performance. With the loss of autonomy comes the possibility of surveillance and threat, and it is this dynamic, in particular, that sets up an opposition in many teachers' minds between a professionally driven and a more democratically driven appraisal scheme. There is more at stake if those who control one's employment conditions have access to appraisal data. Professional forms of appraisal, as practiced in most New Zealand schools, have not assessed the extent to which teacher performance meets or exceeds publicly promulgated minimum requirements. The standards employed in the appraisal context are usually those of the appraisees themselves. Democratically determined standards reduce teachers' control over what is appraised and how it is conducted, and, hence, increase the risks and threat associated with appraisal. Although teachers' preferences for professional forms of accountability can be understood as a defence against threat, they can also be explained in terms of their belief that hierarchical and communitarian appraisal forms of accountability are incompatible with teacher development because they produce defensiveness and avoidance, which are antithetical to the disclosure and trust essential for development.

We argue that it is possible to reconcile democratic accountability requirements and the developmental purpose of appraisal preferred by teachers by designing schemes that meet democratic requirements for information while still providing staff with the security and privacy required to disclose

difficulties and learn how to overcome them. The designers of an appraisal policy should consider the stages of the appraisal cycle that require more and less privacy, and the ways in which information can be conveyed up the hierarchy to meet information requirements of community and state agencies while still respecting staffs' legitimate claims to privacy. For example, managers need to ensure that appraisal has taken place, that performance was evaluated against publicly agreed standards, that an appropriate development plan has been formulated, that required resources to support development are available, and that a timetable for the follow-up evaluation has been set. The details of the process of improvement should be a matter for the individual teacher and his or her appraiser. The process and outcomes of appraisal for the school as a whole, however, need to be publicly known to communitarian and bureaucratic authorities. This information could be collated by management across staff and departments for reporting purposes while protecting the identity of individual teachers.

In a school culture that is hostile to anything other than weak forms of professional accountability, however, achieving such a reconciliation is extremely difficult. In the remainder of this chapter, we discuss how the micropolitics of school cultures sustain the opposition between democratic accountability and professionalism. By micropolitics, we refer to the internal interactions and politics of teachers and administrators within the school buildings, and the interactions between this internal subsystem and external agencies (Iannaccone, 1975). Our argument is illustrated by data from recent surveys of New Zealand school principals and by an intensive case study of the appraisal system of an urban high school.

SURVEY OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

The views of New Zealand secondary school principals on appraisal and its purposes were sought in a survey conducted in March 1996 (Timperley & Robinson, 1996). The 61% of potential respondents who returned the survey represented the full range of school sizes and socioeconomic deciles. The principals indicated that although they accepted the desirability of appraisal, they were divided about whether it should make staff accountable for their performance to management. Most of those who supported appraisal revealed that their support was conditional on their system being consistent with principles of teacher professionalism rather than democratic accountability. For example, one principal wrote in response to a question about the desirability of appraisal: "Yes [it is desirable]. A positive one developed with the cooperation of the staff; not a negative accountability one imposed by the Minister/Ministry."

Others were frustrated, however, with the lack of accountability to management within their current system. As one principal stated,

> My ideas have firmed up on this as a result of seeing just how ineffectual a "developmental" model can be and how frustrating it is for an HOD [Head of Department] to be accountable for the work of his/her department, without those individuals having any accountability.

The appraisal systems these principals had developed in their schools reflected their views on purposes, for 66% described systems in which accountability to management was explicitly ruled out. Whereas some principals believed this type of system appropriate, others were frustrated in their attempts to make their systems more accountable by the micropolitics within their schools. Staff reluctance to be held accountable for their performance appeared to be a powerful determinant in the type of appraisal developed. When asked to rate the effectiveness of their systems and give reasons for their ratings, principals who believed their systems to be effective typically associated this with high staff acceptance. On the other hand, reasons for perceived low effectiveness focused on uncertain commitment, inconsistent implementation by staff, and lack of accountability. For instance, one principal reported, "Key operators have failed to fulfill their part. There is schoolwide suspicion at anything that resembles [to them] accountability."

In Strike's (1990) terms, the appraisal systems developed in most of these schools appeared to be highly undemocratic in that they excluded accountability to either management or to democratic authorities. In the following case study of one of these schools, we examine the micropolitics that led to the principal developing an optional nonthreatening appraisal system that prevented him from meeting his accountability commitments to either the board of trustees or the Education Review Office.

CASE STUDY

Riverview High School was one of six schools participating in a research project designed to investigate how schools solve complex problems (Robinson, Halliday, & Timperley, 1995). The data reported in this chapter were collected over a period of 1 year by using interviews with senior management and staff and observation of staff and departmental meetings to collect baseline data on appraisal policy and practice. Feedback and evaluation interviews with senior management and role plays of appraisal interviews provided opportunities to discuss and validate our analyses.

The following scenario provides a background for Riverview's appraisal system at the time our study began:

John Burton, principal of Riverview, is in a dilemma. Two years ago, he and his staff developed a performance appraisal system whose central purpose was to improve the teaching of staff and the learning of children. Staff were comfortable with the positive professional development focus of the new system, and safeguards were in place to ensure that possible negative evaluations of individual staff performance would not be reported to the senior management team. Staff agreed that these safeguards would allow them to be honest with their chosen appraiser and to identify professional development goals that would affect positively students' learning.

Despite these efforts, their latest Education Review Office report claimed that implementation was sporadic and that the system failed to give management information on the performance of staff. During the Education Review Office's visit, John realised that he could not answer questions about implementation with confidence because confidentiality of both process and outcomes meant he lacked the required information.

After the visit, John decided that the system did need revision. His dilemma was how to make the system more structured and accountable, while simultaneously supporting his staff to challenge themselves professionally and to be open about identifying their professional development needs. He decided that staff could continue to choose their own appraiser with the emphasis remaining on self-evaluation, but the focus of appraisal was to be more constrained. Staff were now limited to common themes determined by the school's management. In addition, each teacher was required to observe the work of another staff member who had expertise in an area in which they wanted to improve.

Forty percent of staff returned an evaluation questionnaire on this revised system. Although the replies indicated that staff members were positive about appraisal, some were critical of what they perceived to be new prescriptive procedures. John hoped that his suspicion that the remaining 60% were ignoring the appraisal guidelines was ill-founded.

This story both describes the evolving set of practices that constituted Riverview's appraisal system and explains why the school developed those particular practices (see Figure 11.1).

The senior management team wanted appraisal to enhance the teaching of staff and the learning of students. This requirement led them to specify the topics for appraisal and to require staff to visit each other's classrooms. In practice, both the appraisal system as a whole and these two components within it were voluntary because both the staff and senior management endorsed a view of teachers consistent with Forsyth and Danisiewicz's (1985) description of autonomous professionals, responsible primarily to themselves

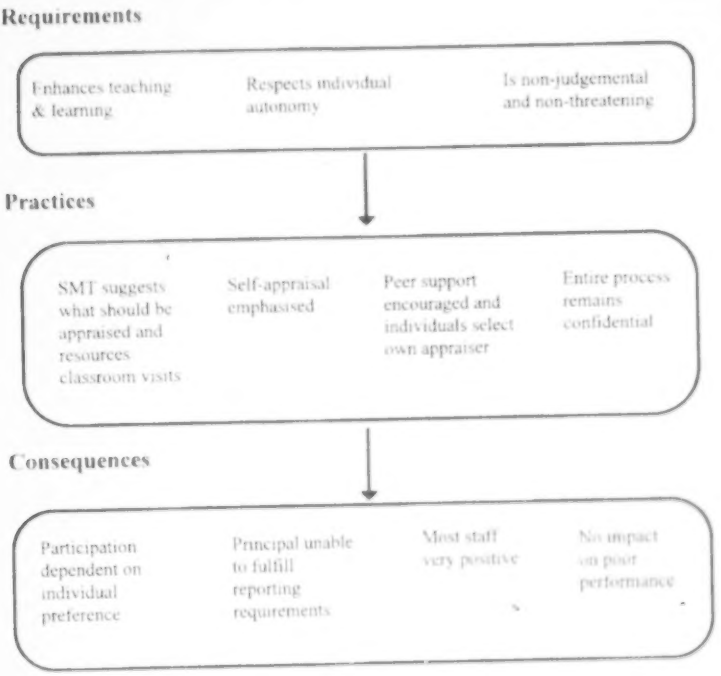
Requirements
Enhances teaching & learning
Respects individual autonomy
Is non-judgemental and non-threatening
Practices
SMT suggests what should be appraised and resources classroom visits
Self-appraisal emphasised
Peer support encouraged and individuals select own appraiser
Entire process remains confidential
Consequences
Participation dependent on individual preference
Principal unable to fulfill reporting requirements
Most staff very positive
No impact on poor performance

Figure 11.1. Analysis of Riverview High School's Appraisal Policy-in-Use

and to a limited extent to their colleagues. At Riverview, this belief led to appraisal practices of self-appraisal, peer support, and confidentiality of process, which effectively undermined accountability to either managers or democratic agencies. The head of a small department expressed his views on accountability in this way:

Interviewer: What do you think it's all for?

Staff 1: I think its fundamental reason is accountability.

Interviewer: To whom?

Staff 1: Making us accountable to ourselves to begin with, then I guess to the school, to the board of trustees. I think the way I read it is that it

provides us with some sort of focus, a personal focus not necessarily tied to curriculum or that sort of thing but a personal focus for us for a particular time. . . . It's pretty much up to us what those goals might be. . . . The important thing for us was setting the objectives. Really, the evaluation, because they were quite personal to us, the only effective evaluation, the most effective evaluation, can only come from you.

Interviewer: What is it that bridges the gap between your being accountable to self and your being the main judge of whether you're succeeding?

Staff 1: I don't think there's anything particularly. It must come down to honesty in the end. . . .

Interviewer: So, in the end, you are saying, you are the only one who really knows.

Staff 1: Probably, but that wouldn't matter.

A second staff member from the science department expressed similar views:

Staff 2: I don't believe that staff appraisal should be formalised, like keeping records, because part of the success of the system is teachers deciding what they need to do to improve themselves and therefore having an ownership to that and a commitment to it. . . . [Formal records] could become a means of harassment, or they could become a means of manipulation. I think people would be too keen to please rather than to work on things; it would become a veneer. You can only be open about your problems when you're trusted and where there's no names to it. . . . It cannot be linked to competence. Then it becomes totally distorted. You've got something else. You've got a mismanagement.

Interviewer: What about external accountability?

Staff 2: No, it cannot be linked to external accountability.

Although staff publicly justified the lack of accountability to management or the community in terms of self-improvement, underpinning this justification was avoidance of the psychological threat associated with the possibility of being negatively evaluated, the third requirement identified in Figure 11.1. To discuss this threat openly was in itself threatening, so the practices designed to address possible problems were constructed in such a way that they were simultaneously nonthreatening. For example, staff were encouraged to visit classrooms they believed to be "best-practice" examples. In doing so, the principal hoped that they would reflect on the adequacy of their own

practice in the light of what they saw and then discuss problems with their peers. His desire to keep the process nonthreatening, however, precluded disclosure of this agenda to staff. As he stated in an interview when discussing the purpose of the classroom visits:

Interviewer: Is it something you've discussed with staff, . . . this thing of whether you're going to go into the difficult areas, the threatening areas, or whether you're going to stay clear of those?

Principal: I think that if you're honest with staff, you have to discuss it.

Interviewer: Have you ever done that?

Principal: No, I haven't and I don't think it's the time to discuss it until . . . I think there's a real danger of discussing that now, before people go into classrooms, because people will focus on that negative thing of going into classrooms, when I suppose I'm trying to focus on the positive, so the benefits for these visitations are not going to be for, the purpose is not going to be that someone is going to come in and observe what you're doing and tell you what you're doing is wrong. The purpose is that someone says, "I do this very well, come and look at me do it." So the visitor is getting something positive from what they are observing.

Interviewer: So the visits are to see good things that are modeled, rather than someone to help you identify your problems.

Principal: Yes. And you move on from that, to then getting the pair being able to trust one another to such a degree that they can then say, "Well, why don't you come and have a look at it." You know, your roles change. . . . It will be a way of teachers taking responsibility for their own teaching and acknowledging with another person and saying, "I've got an area that's lacking" and the other person saying, "I do that really well, come and look at how I do it."

Later on in the same interview, the principal reflected that few teachers would see staff appraisal as making changes in the areas they needed to work on because from the teachers' perspective, "It is easier not to focus on that."

In practice, the principal resolved the tension between being nonthreatening and enhancing teaching and learning, the first two requirements identified in Figure 11.1, by giving priority to the former requirement and hoping that the latter would eventually be met. Confidentiality of the process left him dependent on voluntary offers of information about all aspects of the appraisal process. Consequently, he was criticised by the Education Review Office for not providing information on the quality of teaching and learning in the

school to the democratically elected board of trustees, and for not holding poorly performing teachers to account. Although he felt these criticisms were reasonable, he did not know how to do this and avoid threat.

Principal: I would like people to be more accountable for what's going on in the classroom, and the HODs to be more aware of what's going on inside the classroom. So, at that level between HODs and department members, that's something that I think needs to happen. But I don't know how to get that happening without it being threatening.

The principal did request information on whether staff had found appraisal useful for classroom practice by asking them to complete a questionnaire on the scheme. All but 1 of the 16 people who responded were very positive. For example, two responses to the question "Did you find the appraisal process helpful to your classroom teaching and management?" comprised:

Staff 1: User-friendly—nonthreatening—process a good one. Because we were self-selecting and friends, it was at times hard to stay on task—advantages of working with good friends includes being able to be very open about disasters/failures—disadvantage, focus to talk about.

Staff 2: It was very positive and refreshing to talk to Mel and David; we all enjoyed the meetings. We not only talked about classroom teaching and management. We talked as well about time management and stress factors.

The final consequence noted in Figure 11.1 was the lack of impact the appraisal system had on poor performance. Staff separated appraisal from issues of competence because as one staff member stated, "it's about improving your competence, but if a competence problem has arisen, staff appraisal is not going to do anything about it." This same staff member described "a code of silence" surrounding issues of competence despite considerable talk about professionalism.

The way in which performance appraisal was enacted at Riverview effectively resulted in avoidance of any accountability. Although structurally they were committed to professional accountability through peer review, the issues discussed were at the discretion of the appraisee. The lack of information about staff performance precluded management from reporting to duly elected democratic bodies.

As part of our analysis, we asked members of the senior management team to role-play a simulated appraisal interview with a staff member whose performance they believed to be problematic. In the following transcript, the principal interviews Cathy, a head of department, about her failure to relin-

quish the control needed by those staff members to whom she has delegated specific responsibilities. In his words, "Cathy needs to delegate responsibilities in such a way that there is actually delegation." Cathy is role-played by the deputy principal.

The principal begins by focusing on the topic of concern without disclosing the concern:

Principal: And I just—yeah, I'd really like for you to go over how you made those decisions to, you know, give those different staff members roles. Those particular roles, given the lack of experience for some of those in the department. Would you like to talk briefly about that?

The head of department explains the basis of her assignment of roles to particular staff. The principal then expressed concern about the responsibilities of one staff member (Sarah) and implied that Cathy may also have taken on too much. Cathy's reply, however, stymied the principal's hope that she disclose what he was reluctant to reveal.

Cathy: I feel really quite good about it because I spent quite a lot of time in the summer holidays rewriting the Fifth Form course, you know, in line for the new curriculum. So it's actually all there; all the resources are there and um, Sarah just has to make sure that the others have got the resources and I'm supporting her as much as I can there. And well, so I think that she's—she's, able to manage that responsibility.

Cathy's positive evaluation left the principal in the position of having to accept, rather than challenge, Cathy's evaluation of her leadership. The senior management team agreed that the pattern of interaction evident in this scenario was a typical portrayal of their efforts to confront poorly performing staff and that it resulted in issues of poor performance remaining unchallenged, thus leaving management unable to hold its staff to account.

The values of not judging others and respecting professional autonomy that underpinned the appraisal system were also evident in the dynamics of the school culture as a whole (see Figure 11.2). A guiding value of collegiality as equality of authority led to staff decisions being made by consensus after full discussion of any major decision. The appraisal policy had to be approved by staff, and even with this approval, the senior management felt they did not have the authority to require individual compliance. Equality of authority inevitably placed an appraisal system in which teachers were accountable to managers in direct conflict with the school culture. As the assistant principal expressed it when discussing the constraints on the authority of the heads of

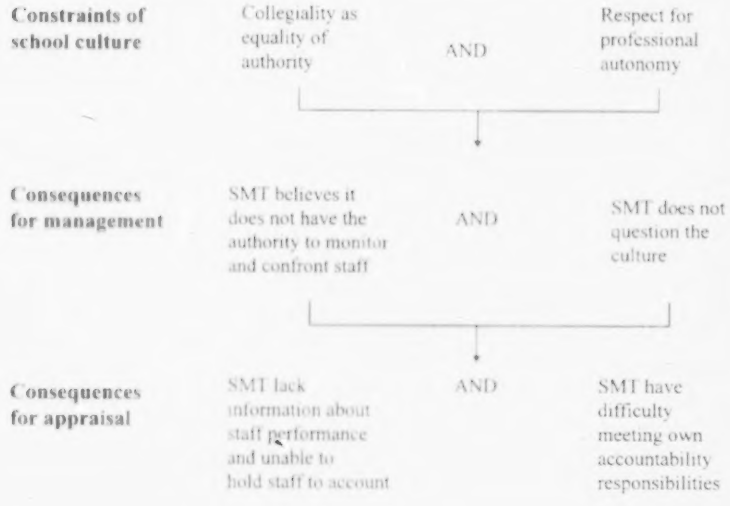
Constraints of school culture
Collegiality as equality of authority
AND
Respect for professional autonomy
Consequences for management
SMT believes it does not have the authority to monitor and confront staff
AND
SMT does not question the culture
Consequences for appraisal
SMT lack information about staff performance and unable to hold staff to account
AND
SMT have difficulty meeting own accountability responsibilities

Figure 11.2. The Links Between School Culture, Management Power, and Appraisal

department, the decision-making system was one where "Jack is as good as his master."

Assistant Principal: I don't think you can have a system where everybody, you know Jack's as good as his head of department and then suddenly easily extend it—a system where the head of department is going to make comments about Jack or make judgements about Jack. . . .

This decision-making tradition, along with a reluctance on the part of members of the senior management team to challenge the boundaries of professional autonomy, led to management believing they lacked a mandate to actively monitor the work of their staff. Their conviction about the power of the school culture in this regard meant that they did neither publicly question their beliefs about its value nor publicly articulate the various dilemmas it led to, in particular, how it precluded them from fulfilling their own accountability responsibilities for the quality of curriculum delivery and resource utilisation to relevant democratic agencies.

INTERVENTION

At the request of the senior management team, we worked with them for 1 year to develop a new appraisal system that integrated both the staff's professional requirements for respect and support and management's requirements for accountability. A detailed description of this intervention is beyond the scope of this chapter but is reported in Robinson et al. (1996). In essence, it comprised four components. First, the values, beliefs, and practical issues that underlay current practice were identified to determine what could be retained and what needed revision. During this process, issues related to the school culture and how it affected appraisal were debated and resolved. Second, a new set of requirements for appraisal was formulated and debated with staff. These included both staff requirements that the system supported them and promoted their professional development, and management requirements for accountability. This set of requirements was not intended to be final but rather served as a touchstone for the development of appraisal practices, the third component of the intervention. Developing these practices was achieved independently of the researchers in a series of meetings between the school management and staff. Finally, in a series of five interpersonal-skills workshops, the senior management team developed the skills they needed to articulate the tensions between the proposed requirements and to debate their resolution with the staff. This was a very demanding task for the management team.

In this description, we do not intend to imply that the process of developing the new scheme was either linear or straightforward. Each component was developed alongside the others, and many setbacks were experienced. An organisational culture, together with its micropolitics, does not change overnight.

CONCLUSION

Debates about democratic accountability in education inevitably reveal tensions between accountability to democratic authorities and professionalism. If policies on accountability are to be effective, they need to be formulated in a context of debate about how this tension may be resolved. To debate accountability outside this context is to miss its politics altogether. Survey and qualitative case study data, such as that we have presented in this chapter, show how the balance between these requirements is currently struck, and with what consequences. In New Zealand, at present, the balance is struck very much in favour of professionalism at the cost of democracy. Although the case we presented represents one of the more extreme examples of a professional school culture that we have encountered, our survey data, along with similar Australian evidence (Macpherson, 1996), suggest that the pattern it represents is typical.

Paradoxically, our data about appraisal policies in use present a quite different picture from that described by those commentators who perceive an increasingly managerialist trend in New Zealand educational policy (Olssen & Morris Matthews, 1997). There is no doubt that policy discourse, as represented in official documents, reflects an increased emphasis on monitoring and reporting the outcomes of teaching programmes and the quality of teachers themselves (Education Review Office, 1995; Fancy, 1997). Our data suggest, however, that managerialism, in which moral accountability is replaced by contractual technical accountability (Macpherson, 1996) with an emphasis on results rather than process (Boston, Martin, Pallot, & Walsh, 1996), is barely operative in New Zealand secondary schools. Although this can be celebrated, progress toward genuinely democratic accountability seems painfully slow. Our research suggests that a key to making progress lies in formulating policies and support systems that directly address the relationship between democratic accountability and professionalism, for it is the achievement of an appropriate balance between them that constitutes the greatest challenge to the implementation of New Zealand's new appraisal policies.

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12

The Comparative Politics of Accountability of New South Wales and Alberta

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One result of the widespread debate about the role of schools in many parts of the world has been an increase in public demands for accountability, accompanied by expanded student evaluation programs, mandated cycles of teacher and school evaluations, and closer scrutiny of teacher education programs (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1993; Barlow & Robertson, 1994).

Accountability demands were at the heart of discussions that occurred between 14 representatives of educational organizations in New South Wales, Australia, and about 50 educators in Alberta, Canada. The Australian participants represented Department of Education personnel, teachers, school administrators, and professors. Their Canadian counterparts consisted of representatives of teachers, school administrators, and school board members, along with graduate students and professors from two Alberta universities.

The timing of the discussions had a strong influence on the tone and content of the dialogue. The New South Wales representatives had experienced more than 4 years of dramatic systemic change at the heart of which had been a strategy of "devolution," an attempt by the government of the day to break up the large and venerable bureaucracy that was the New South

AUTHORS' NOTE: This chapter is based, in part, on a 2-day series of large-group presentations and focus group discussions sponsored by the Centre for Leadership in Learning at the University of Calgary, the Faculties of Education at the University of Calgary and the University of Lethbridge, and the Alberta Affiliate of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. The authors gratefully acknowledge the assistance of senior officials in the New South Wales Department of School Education, numerous graduate students, and other university colleagues in gathering the information in this chapter.

Wales Department of Education. Albertan educators, on the other hand, were in the middle of the first full year of an educational reform agenda, based loosely on the New Zealand model and the theories of Sir Roger Douglas (see, e.g., Douglas, 1993) that reduced provincial spending on public education by about 12%.

Those in attendance participated in a structured series of large-group presentations and focus group discussions. Participant-recorders documented what they considered to be key components of the conversations. The data compiled in this way were subjected to a process of content analysis in which pieces of information were grouped according to a shared set of attributes. Categories were not predetermined but emerged from a process of induction. The resulting patterns of conversation were presented to a small sample of participants for verification.

The next section of the chapter describes some of the most salient elements of the institutional and political contexts within which accountability policies have been implemented in each system. It is followed by a summary and discussion of the central elements of participants' comments.

Alberta's public education system provides K-12 educational services to more than 400,000 students in Catholic and nondenominational schools. Furthermore, almost 15% of Alberta's students are educated in private schools that also receive limited government funding. For the more than 26,000 teachers in the public system, membership in the Alberta Teachers' Association is mandatory. Politically, Alberta has been served by a succession of conservative governments for all of the postwar years; in that time, the Alberta Teachers' Association has earned a reputation for its strong commitment to the welfare of its membership, its willingness to seek partnership with other educational stakeholders, its support for the principles of collective bargaining, and its success in balancing its commitment to matters that could be characterized as either professional or union related. For more than 40 years, the Alberta Teachers' Association has been involved directly in some periods of dramatic strike action and in flirtations with other forms of aggressive political activism, but in any comparative sense, it likely would not be regarded as a radical teachers' association.

From the early 1970s, Alberta's many school districts (more than 160 in the late 1980s) were served by locally appointed school superintendents chosen by locally elected school boards. The Department of Education grew steadily in size and influence in the 1970s and 1980s, during which time virtually all major matters relating to curriculum, teacher certification, and achievement testing were centralized.

However, the 1990s have seen the most profound changes in the history of public education in the province. Site-based management and school councils were mandated. The right to determine and collect property taxes was

shifted from school boards to the province so that a more equitable sharing of all the funding available for public education could be effected. The number of school boards was reduced to 57, and all salaries were reduced by 5%. Budgets were drastically trimmed, the role of the superintendency was redefined, and the role of the principal was articulated more clearly in policy. According to senior officials in one large school district that serves more than 90,000 students, their budget was reduced from $540 million to $470 million in the past 10 years, although their student population has remained fairly steady (Aitken, Aitken, Townsend, & Warnica, 1996).

The new economic order had its most obvious impact on the governance and management structures of public education. There are fewer school board members, fewer assistant and deputy superintendents, virtually no central office consultants, and only a vestige of what used to be a vigorous network of regional offices of education. In schools, the economic downsizing occurred in conjunction with major initiatives in the integration of students with special needs, so that one of the most obvious effects in many districts was a loss of special education teachers, coupled with an increase in class size. Since the early 1990s, teacher-librarians almost disappeared from the public schools, and counseling services were reduced steadily.

The explicit political goal of the provincial government was to increase the accountability of public education, both fiscally and academically. In the process, the government appeared to prevail over the objections of certain special interest groups (while appeasing many others) and to have rendered politically ineffectual most of the responses of the Alberta Teachers' Association. In a recent interview, the president of the Alberta Teachers' Association, Baumi McKay, spoke of "an increased militancy among teachers," suggesting that teachers were "becoming increasingly demoralized and disgruntled" (Dawson, 1997). Given all that has happened in the past 4 years, that seems like a fairly modest response.

New South Wales, on the other hand, has a much larger public school system serving a much greater population. The New South Wales Teachers' Federation boasts a membership of more than 50,000 public school teachers in a state in which nearly 30% of all students are educated in private schools (the Catholic system is considered to be "private"). The Teachers' Federation is a major factor in the politics of the state, and its record of industrial action on behalf of its membership and in the promotion of its own political agenda almost certainly would place it in the top ranks of aggressive teacher organizations worldwide. It is generally conceded that the teachers of New South Wales have played important, sometimes pivotal, roles in many of the state's elections in the past 50 years.

For most of Australia's existence, the New South Wales Department of Education has been a bureaucratic institution, in all senses of the term. When

change did come to the public education system, it came quickly, and in a succession of waves that have washed away many of the traditional structures and many of the temporary ones that replaced them. For example, as recently as the early 1990s, the heavily centralized system was supported by as many as 12 regional offices that maintained close control over, and provided a great range of support to, the schools of each region. In a system without school boards, superintendencies, or district offices, the Regional Offices of School Education serviced many different functions. In the late 1980s, when the old system of school inspectorates was phased out, it was replaced with a parallel structure of school clusters (perhaps as many as 20 schools) led by directors (often former inspectors) and staffed by highly trained consultants. Less than 3 years after the formation of clusters, another dramatic reorganization of the whole system, referred to as "devolution," saw the breaking up of the great central bureaucracy and the relocation of much power and authority into the various regional offices. At this time, too, a process of quality assurance was instituted primarily for accountability purposes. For a brief period, quality assurance teams—often staffed by former inspectors, directors, and consultants—became the most visible presence in schools of the central authority of the Department of Education. Concurrently, moves to introduce site-based management and local advisory councils proceeded throughout the system. Furthermore, there were some hopeful signs of cooperation between the Department of Education and the Teachers' Federation in matters relating to professional development.

Almost without warning, certainly before many of the changes already implemented had a chance to take hold, the next reorganization of the system saw the introduction of school superintendents, a very radical shift. And while the teachers and the public still were adjusting to the idea of a system newly subdivided into 40 superintendencies, the government approved the dissolution of regional offices and the return of power and authority to the central bureaucracy located in the capital, Sydney.

Changes had come faster than could be accommodated by normal processes of negotiation between government and the Teachers' Federation. As conditions appeared to worsen for its membership, the New South Wales Teachers' Federation became increasingly militant. One key initiative was its success in blocking access to classrooms for quality assurance teams, thus rendering inoperative one of the ministry's most important agencies of accountability. As an election approached, the Teachers' Federation organized a series of rotating strikes; joined forces, albeit temporarily, with private school teacher organizations in challenging the government for improved salaries for teachers; and waged a relentless campaign throughout the media on behalf of its membership that gained considerable public support. In 1996, in exchange for what were termed "productivity trade-offs," representatives

of the New South Wales Teachers' Federation negotiated a salary agreement that provided teachers with a 16% increase over 3 years.

THE ISSUE OF QUALITY

Participants in the focus groups agreed that confusion often surrounds the use of the word *quality*. Overuse of the word has made its meaning imprecise, and its selective use for political purposes has generated an almost antithetical meaning for the word. Participants noted the vagueness of relationships often cited between quality teaching and quality learning, and they argued for a more clearly articulated principle of quality education. Participants spoke of the effects of organizational structure and school leadership on the quality of schooling, observing that quality may be indicated by levels of community involvement in schools, opportunities for student and teacher self-evaluation, or alignment between curriculum and instruction. Alternatively, it may be revealed in the degree to which teachers and principals are encouraged and allowed to grow professionally.

Despite the difficulty of definition, participants agreed that quality learning is the right of every child and that it does not happen accidentally. They felt that all those involved in the provision of quality teaching would need to examine the beliefs that underpin their practices. Only then might they determine how their goals, roles, and responsibilities can be translated into practices that support student learning. There was general agreement that much of what students learn should be applicable to living and working successfully in society.

An issue of quality that provoked differences of opinion was the widespread focus on observable learning outcomes. Several participants cautioned that the focus is driven, in part, by efficiency and effectiveness motives based on the belief that educational systems must compete with one another on local, national, and international bases. It was also said that linkages between competition in education and nations' abilities to compete economically with one another are tenuous. In fact, such beliefs can lead to education being treated as a commodity and can prevent particular groups of students from having their learning needs met.

Recent moves in Western nations toward national curricula and common accountability standards in the name of quality were cited as examples of education being treated more as a commercial enterprise. For example, Australian Ministry of Education personnel and representatives from business collaborated in recent years to develop curriculum statements that described what students should be learning in the six states and two territories. The common expectations for learning were called *subject profiles*. Each grade level was divided into eight levels, and profiles of what students should be learning at

each level were provided to school communities. The result was not a national curriculum per se but a curriculum statement that nevertheless shaped instruction across the country. The movement was cited in the Australian-Canadian talks as an indicator of how one national government has moved to usurp the educational decision-making power of regional governments.

On the issue of quality, Australian educators appeared to be most influenced by the existence within their system of the primary instrument of accountability, the quality assurance team. Albertan educators tended to speak of quality with reference to the various lists of indicators just emerging at the time that were being promoted by Alberta education as best measures of quality.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR STAKEHOLDERS

Participants asked, "Who should establish the criteria by which student learning is judged?" In response, there emerged a sense that input from teachers, students, parents, administrators, government officials, and business people was essential. A senior Australian Ministry of Education official voiced the concern that teachers were in danger of being perceived as insular and insecure if they resisted the involvement of business in the establishment of standards for student achievement. Other participants conceded that educational decision making was a highly political enterprise but stressed the need for stakeholder partnerships that are truly collaborative.

It was agreed that parents who strongly desire back-to-the-basics education for their children need to feel that they are not trapped in school systems that fail to value their opinions. Overall, the Canadian and Australian educators felt a strong need to establish a culture in their respective school communities that allowed conflicts to be addressed effectively and promoted deeper understandings of the beliefs and values of all stakeholders. Educators from both countries appeared committed to the idea that site-based management was the most appropriate organizational structure for achieving and enhancing school-community relationships.

There was a strong sentiment that teachers must examine what they do. However, both Canadian and Australian educators stated that teachers in their respective countries were shocked at the weight and number of recent political and economic forces affecting life in classrooms. In fact, participants claimed that teachers in both systems were confused, frustrated, and angered by concurrent reductions in school budgets and escalating demands for accountability. Some teachers reportedly felt that they were losing control of their professional lives and that their views were discounted routinely or ignored by politicians. Clearly, the discussions between educators from the

two countries highlighted their desire for policymakers to pay more thoughtful attention to the concerns of teachers and principals.

The focus group participants identified several new societal expectations that Canadian and Australian teachers must understand and meet. Foremost was the fact that poor or even borderline teachers must not be tolerated by their colleagues or by society. Although participants in these discussions failed to define poor teaching, they did describe what they wanted to see in teachers. More important, the educators wanted teachers who could articulate their beliefs about teaching and students. Furthermore, they wanted teachers who understand how children learn and who know how to facilitate learning by using a variety of effective teaching strategies. In addition, participants stressed the need for teachers who recognize the awesome moral responsibility that accompanies their power to change students' lives forever. Moreover, teachers must recognize that they are important role models who must be caring in their interactions with young people to a degree that participants said they do not see often enough in schools.

The Canadian and Australian educators noted that the foregoing expectations for teachers required a nurturing environment, and they expressed some doubt that enough schools in either country were nurturing workplaces. Significantly, participants said that teachers must be free to try new paradigms and that principals, especially, must be able to facilitate risk taking by teachers. Finally, they argued that expectations for teachers need to be considered from a realistic perspective. That is, school communities must set clear parameters around what they can do, because attempting to be all things to all people is a recipe for failure and dissatisfaction.

Participants from both countries concurred that political pressure on their respective school systems had never been greater. At the same time, however, they clearly agreed with some of the most fundamental assumptions of accountability measures in both countries, namely, that site-based management was a good thing, ineffective teachers must not be tolerated, teachers must accept their responsibilities as role models for students, and the interests of the business community should be accommodated in educational decision making.

BELIEFS AND BEHAVIORS THAT SUPPORT QUALITY LEARNING

Teachers' efforts to foster student learning must be predicated on clearly articulated beliefs, according to participants. First, quality learning must be directly related to life within the larger society. Second, teachers and parents must believe that every child can be a successful learner. Third, all members

of a school community, including business people, nonparents, and students, must align their actions with the principle that quality learning is a fundamental right of every young person. Finally, adults interested in promoting student learning must strive to determine what it is that students know and then to structure opportunities for students to share in th shaping of their learning environments.

Participants also felt it should be a responsibility of significant adults in children's lives to build high levels of interpersonal trust that will allow students to explore outside of their comfort zones. Furthermore, they argued, adults must be proactive and show young people what responsible behavior looks like, and adults must recognize that involving students in decision making requires a set of skills and knowledge that needs to be expanded and refined constantly. Moreover, students will need varying degrees of help in assuming ownership for their own learning. Students must be provided with both access to sources of knowledge and reasons to use those sources. Basic knowledge is important, they said, but teachers need to balance the interrelatedness of knowledge across disciplines with the integrity of discipline-specific content. Finally, teachers, parents, and children, too, must be able to respond coherently and convincingly to the question, "Why are we doing this?"

The tone of this discussion was decidedly serious. A strong sense of duty prevailed. The dominant belief was that educators must accept higher levels of responsibility for the education of all children. However, political leaders in both countries were known to believe that responsibility needed to be assured through more detailed accountability measures, whereas most participants appeared to believe that accountability should result from the best professional intentions of committed educators.

POLITICS OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Evaluation in education is essentially a political process, participants concluded, and the prevailing agenda of the times determines how the following questions will be addressed: Why evaluate? What should be evaluated? Who should be the evaluator? How often should a person or program be evaluated? What constitutes credible evaluation data?

The focus group participants attempted to provide answers to some of the above questions. First, they said that if students and teachers are committed to maximizing learning experiences for students, they need to know what their communities think they are doing well and what needs to be improved. They were adamant that all members of school communities can benefit from a continuing process of gathering meaningful information and using it productively before students leave school.

There was very strong participant support for remedial action when evaluation data led to the conclusion that students and teachers in particular were performing their duties poorly, provided the evaluation data were subjected to careful and credible analyses. It was recognized that relying too much on one type of evaluation method had the potential to decrease the overall quality of student and teacher work.

It was agreed that assessment of students and teachers should allow for actual demonstration of skills and knowledge. That is, assessment should be as authentic as reasonably possible, so it is important that evaluation go beyond the superficial and easily quantifiable. However, in keeping with the political nature of evaluation, it was argued that accountability measures also must address issues that are acceptable to consumers of the evaluation data.

Although educators must balance the utility and authenticity of evaluation data with the availability of resources, prioritizing information needs can make it possible for highly authentic evaluation procedures to be employed, it was claimed. For example, portfolios, peer discussion, or art shows require large amounts of time and energy but are possible if resources allocated to other evaluation methodologies can be redirected. In fact, one Australian educator noted that teachers already collect a great deal of performance-related data that they typically have viewed as not useful for reporting purposes.

Assessment of quality learning is more than student evaluation. For example, the Australian educators described a quality assurance process, now suspended, that was used in New South Wales to profile indicators of quality learning. The process involved a panel of evaluators who visited a school for about 5 days to talk with students, teachers, and community members. The panel included external people plus the principal, a teacher, and a parent from the school being studied. Conversations focused on questions that were derived from prior negotiations between members of the school community and the external evaluators. Review questions concentrated on student welfare, indicators of student learning, and quality of teaching.

In both jurisdictions, it was conceded, the most important measures of accountability—the evaluation of teachers and schools—were being applied unevenly, perhaps ineffectually. Representatives of both countries were more than willing to talk about what could or should happen in evaluation, but few were able to cite convincing examples of best practice in either system.

CHALLENGES OF ACCOUNTABILITY

"Simply having standards doesn't ensure that quality teaching will happen." This statement by a Canadian educator was accompanied by many other concerns. Among them was the fear that using standardized tests to keep students and teachers accountable can stifle creativity and contribute to a kind

of free-floating hostility in the ranks of teachers and principals. Yet another concern centered on the ambiguity of the term *success*, which allows for a host of sometimes competing interpretations.

Focus group participants noted that such popular slogans as "all students must succeed" and "acceptance of success and success alone," depending on how they were used, could be destructive. For example, Australians cited the fact that hundreds of thousands of young, mainly White male persons in their country were failing at school, or unemployed. The Australian adolescents were described as disadvantaged by their low socioeconomic backgrounds and "difficult to teach." Educators believed in the goal of success for all students but felt that teachers did not have the resources or even the skills to achieve the ideal. Nor did they believe they had the sincere commitment of their respective political leaders to the achievement of such lofty goals. Canadian educators wondered if serious teacher commitment over an extended period was an unrealistic expectation given circumstances in which the likelihood of student failure was high.

The Australian and Canadian participants felt that educators needed sufficient time to change based on the results of persuasive evaluation, but politicians and bureaucrats are under pressure to produce observable changes between elections. Participants observed that the change agenda is governed by "politicians [who] make the erroneous assumption that teachers can absorb in 6 months, change that should take about 6 years." The consequence is too often change that is little more than a "mirage."

Interestingly, participants varied widely in their perceptions of teachers' abilities to handle educational change. A Canadian professor noted that moving slowly can permit educators to "couch their arguments in noble principles to satisfy their personal needs to scuttle any proposal." Other participants suggested that the current context of rapid societal change does not afford educators the luxury of gradual change.

The statement that "the attitudes of teachers" have to be changed represented a view widely supported by participants. Further, an Australian referred to educators who resist change as "shellbacks." In support of such observations, a Canadian classroom teacher offered the opinion that "most teachers don't want to take time to learn to make changes." Australians noted that the work environment for teachers in their country did not support a very high level of professionalism, resulting in, among other things, a "very high absenteeism rate," which contrasted with that person's impression of Alberta teachers. Moreover, the Australians felt that the teachers' union in New South Wales was not always supportive of initiatives to link quality teaching with quality learning. Canadian participants felt that the Alberta Teachers' Association was more passive, less connected politically, more conciliatory, and less willing to undertake aggressive political action.

Australian participants felt strongly that any accountability measures introduced into the New South Wales system would have to meet very strict standards of acceptability articulated and enforced by the Teachers' Federation, even as many of them voiced some dissatisfaction with the power and influence of the federation. However, there was general agreement that politicians in both countries possessed only a limited understanding of how change occurred in school systems and of the difference between a mandated reform agenda based on political considerations and the rate of implementation of even the most necessary changes.

Maintaining a focus on quality learning requires system support, although the nature of support must be different in New South Wales and Alberta for several reasons. For instance, whereas Australian and Canadian legislation gives control of education to each state or province, New South Wales has a much more highly centralized system than Alberta. When differences of school size, culture, history, and teacher education also are considered, other reasons become apparent. Nevertheless, there are common issues that can be considered in relation to quality learning.

For instance, all participants agreed that leadership is a critical factor. There was also strong support for the notion that senior administrators and school principals must believe firmly that teachers can adjust, adapt, and succeed. Moreover, a belief in teachers' abilities must be accompanied by a strong desire to support professional development initiatives in recognition of the fact that "there can be no significant innovation in education that does not have at its center the attitudes of teachers."

Professional development must focus concurrently on teachers' individual needs and system needs. This implies a move away from professional development done *to* teachers to professional development done *with* and *by* teachers. Such professional development must be well planned, providing teachers and administrators with similar knowledge bases, even a similar "language" base, from which they can make unique contributions to a common set of goals. Surprisingly for groups that live and work so far apart, participants came to the shared conclusion that teachers need to see themselves as participants in action research within their school communities.

Participants noted that in both Alberta and New South Wales, there was little monetary incentive for teachers to do advanced study or to work harder. Moreover, the educators felt that "teaching is the only career where you are asked to upgrade on your own time and are penalized if you don't." When comparing opportunities for professional development, Australian educators described the inconvenience of studying during their summer break, which coincides with Christmas, whereas Canadian educators noted that July and August are months most often used for professional development, although most teachers in Alberta use their summers for vacation rather than for study

and reflection. Educators from Alberta and New South Wales identified the increasing scarcity of sabbatical leaves and the aging of the teaching population as two of many factors inhibiting participation in professional development programs.

The future role of university faculties of education emerged as an important issue in the cross-cultural dialogue. Teacher educators were asked to examine their leadership responsibilities and make alterations to reflect the current and future contexts of schooling. Faculties of education were also advised to consider designing more innovative programs such as the Master of Education in Leadership, Management, or Curriculum jointly administered by the New South Wales Department of Education and the University of Wollongong.

The Canadian and Australian educators offered examples of professional development needed in schools. For instance, the integration of students with disabilities into schools means that teachers must become more skilled in using and interpreting the results of psychometric assessments. Inclusion also means that teachers and principals need to become more flexible and pragmatic, develop skills in conflict resolution, and become much more adept in communicating with many different groups of people. In addition, educators need enhanced understandings of school culture and school-community relations. The changing social environment requires teachers to be more aware than ever before of issues such as racism, multiculturalism, school discipline, child abuse and neglect, and political-legal obligations.

Both groups of educators agreed that professional development for teachers is generally inadequate and fails most frequently to accommodate in a timely fashion the changing roles and responsibilities of educators. An even more strongly supported conclusion was that accountability measures, as they are being implemented in both countries, are having a negative impact on professional development, staff morale, and career ambition.

CONCLUSION

The discussions between educators from New South Wales and Alberta revealed the existence of high levels of mutual respect among participants and a growing appreciation for the things that unite, as opposed to those that divide, educators on two separate continents. Although mistrust of the motives of politicians was widely shared and openly expressed, there was a countervailing and equally strong sentiment that educators in all facets of public education must accept increasing responsibility for ensuring the appropriateness and the effectiveness of their teaching practices, for the health and strength of the teaching profession, and for the continuation of the com-

mitment of an ever more skeptical public to the fundamental principles of public education.

These educators believed that accountability is a logical outgrowth of professional responsibility. Moreover, they made the point frequently that it is not only simplistic but perhaps even plainly wrong for elected decision makers to assume that responsibility in public education can be produced by politically developed and centrally imposed measures of accountability. Their opinions may well have been validated by subsequent events. In New South Wales, concerted efforts by a powerful Teachers' Federation have thwarted virtually every attempt by the Department of Education to put its planned measures of accountability into practice, whereas in Alberta, there is growing evidence of educator dissatisfaction and demoralization in response to that province's agenda (see, e.g., Townsend, Penton, Aitken, & Gowans, 1997).

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13

Conceptualizing Accountability

A Liberal Framework

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Over the past several decades, the term *accountability* has been used with increasing frequency in education and in government. In Canada, "accountability has become a critical issue in the current debate about education" (Bacon, 1995, p. 85) and has provided the "central thrust in Canadian education reform agendas during the last decade" (Mawhinney, 1995, p. 505). "Increasing" accountability has provided the rationale for a changing educational purpose and for various reforms, including a focus on "province-wide planning," on "more and better reporting of information," and on "results." Under the auspices of improving accountability, testing has been increased in all provinces, most provinces have developed indicators of achievement, Alberta has developed a 3-year business plan, and Ontario has established an Education Quality and Accountability Office. Furthermore, accountability has been identified as a major theme of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, and has become a topic of debate for scholars and practitioners alike.

The pervasiveness of accountability as a method for reforming education may lead one to assume that a high degree of clarity surrounds the term, and a great deal of thought has gone into establishing the principles and elements that undergird the concept to ensure that the processes and mechanisms developed in its name are conceptually coherent. This is particularly true given the extent to which accountability reforms have been embraced by educational policymakers and practitioners over a number of years, and in various countries.

It is surprising to discover that no such clarity exists. Despite an outpouring of resources to make public education more accountable, it can be stated with some confidence that "in practical and theoretical terms, the area [of accountability] is a mess" (Macpherson, 1995, p. 475), and the concept is "in

urgent need of rehabilitation" (Macpherson, 1996, p. 1). Because concepts "are used to think about, guide and control the ongoing educative process . . . a clear understanding of these concepts is an essential prerequisite to dealing intelligently with any educational activity" (Soltis, 1968, p. iv). Dealing intelligently with accountability, therefore, requires a clear understanding of the concept.

This chapter takes some first steps toward the development of a framework centered on the idea of accountability. To do this, the chapter is divided into five sections. The first discusses the need for a framework. The second briefly outlines principles and elements that undergird the concept of accountability. The third highlights the relationship between educational processes and political theories. The fourth uses Manzer's (1994) liberal typologies to illustrate how accountability strategies gain their legitimacy on the basis of political philosophy. The final section provides a summary and discussion.

THE NEED FOR A FRAMEWORK

In 1975, after reviewing more than 4,000 accountability-related items, Browder expressed the need for a "common point of reference" to organize the vast array of accountability strategies developed (p. 4). Twenty years later, Cibulka and Derlin (1995) noted that performance reporting, a common accountability strategy, "has not been integrated into [a] coherent and well integrated educational policy system" (p. 488). Also, in her review of monitoring processes in one Canadian province, Mawhinney (1995) concluded that "the problem, according to public and academic critics alike, is that the monitoring processes are not always developed within an appropriate accountability framework" (p. 508). The need for a framework was expressed by a Canadian school trustee who stated, "Alberta has a well-developed assessment process and a tremendous amount of data . . . what we lack is a framework to make sense of it all" (Church, 1995, p. 79).

Although frameworks have been developed in the literature over time, they have not focused specifically on the *idea* of accountability. For example, Darling-Hammond and Ascher's (1991) framework is centered on five types of accountability mechanisms, Mawhinney's (1995) "monitoring framework for accountability" is directed around policy actions and outcomes, and Levin's (1974) "conceptual framework" is an organizational planning model that includes an accountability component. Because these frameworks are organized around one aspect of accountability, they lack the conceptual capacity to pull together the disparate pieces of the accountability puzzle.

PRINCIPLES AND ELEMENTS

One way to clarify and give substance to a concept that has been described as "complex" (Cibulka, 1990), as "vague and rhetorical" (Levin, 1972), and as "slippery" (Cooper, 1988) is to identify undergirding principles and elements. A report of the Canadian government identifies three principles of accountability that provide the core of the framework developed in this chapter. They are transparency, disclosure, and redress (Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Canada, 1996, p. 3). According to the report, transparency "refers to ensuring that the governance structures, operations and decision-making processes are clear and open for observation and participation by the people" (p. 3); disclosure "refers to the timely reporting of program and financial performance . . . in accordance with approved plans" (pp. 2-3); and redress "refers to providing the means for individuals to appeal decisions affecting them" (p. 3). These principles also appear in the accountability literature, although they remain undeveloped (Bajunid, 1995; Cibulka & Derlin, 1995; Glass, 1972).

In a framework, principles and elements can serve as a "common point of reference" from which to organize diverse accountability strategies. For example, setting goals and designing action plans are strategies for enhancing transparency; reporting on the progress made toward those goals is a strategy for enhancing disclosure; and developing a process to address concerns related to the goals, action plans, or both facilitates a process for redress.

Identifying *elements* adds further substance and clarity to the concept. Elements provide a necessary link between principles and the strategies developed to increase accountability. They include, but are not limited to, *planning*, *reporting*, *monitoring*, *assessment*, *communication*, and *responsiveness*. Elements appear in the accountability literature; for example, Earl (1995) insisted that "the essence of accountability is good communication and genuine respect" (p. 62). Furthermore, increasing accountability is often related to increasing assessment (Earl & LeMahieu, 1996), and assessment is also included as one of the seven elements of accountability identified by the Ministry of Education in British Columbia (Hodgkinson, 1995, p. 19). Other elements include reports, program evaluation, and communication (p. 19). Alberta Education (1995) advocated strategic planning as a way to increase accountability.

The principles and elements of accountability provide a central component of an accountability framework. All accountability initiatives should link back to the elements and the principles. It must be remembered, however, that accountability processes, like all educational processes, gain their legitimacy on the basis of political ideology. As Torres (1995) suggested, education is neither "politically neutral, nor technically 'objective' " (p. 263). In developing an

accountability framework, therefore, it is useful to consider the political dimension of accountability strategies.

THE POLITICAL DIMENSION

Efforts to "increase" accountability in public education have always sparked debates embedded in ideological differences about the purposes of public education. This can be observed in the accountability literature over time, and it remains as apparent in recent discussions as it was in those of the past. In the 1970s, for example, John Goodlad (1979) criticized the narrowness of accountability practices and assumptions, and presented an alternative "ecological" accountability model. Following his lead, others discussed accountability from a "humanist perspective" (Nash, 1979), from the perspective of "schools as social systems" (Edelfelt, 1979), and from accountability's "ideological-historical context" (Bowers, 1979). These discussions reveal that although the idea of accountability is not contentious, the way it has been applied is. Reflecting this, Nash (1979) and Bowers (1979) cautioned that the "current practices of accountability may be destructive of desirable educational ends" (Reagan & Raywid, 1979, p. 306).

Controversy over accountability remains. Although advances in technology have provided increasingly sophisticated and technical methods for holding public education accountable, opponents continue to point to the shortcomings, confusion, and even the potential harm of accountability procedures. For example, there is disagreement on the validity of the assumptions underlying accountability-related reforms (Astuto, Clark, Read, McGree, & Fernandez, 1994; McEwen, Fagan, Earl, Hodgkinson, & Maheu, 1995, p. 101) and on the legitimacy of those reforms at the school level (Macpherson, 1996). Furthermore, as in the past, there is a concern that "accountability pressures . . . contribute to school climates that are profoundly anti-educational" (Sykes & Elmore, 1988, p. 91).

The political nature of accountability-linked reforms has been recognized in the literature over time (Astuto et al., 1994; Becher & Maclure, 1978; Cibulka & Derlin, 1995; Earl & LeMahieu, 1996; Macpherson, 1996). Becher and Maclure (1978) highlighted the need to think politically about accountability reforms when they warned, "To allow the accountability debate to be conducted at a purely technical level would be to engage in self-deception and ensure that the end result satisfied nobody" (p. 222). Also, in his analysis of conflicting interpretations of accountability, Kogan (1986) argued that "to make sense of accountability it is necessary to identify first the dominant normative theories, that is, statements of the desirable purposes and modes of accountability" (p. 17). In the underbelly of seemingly neutral

technical processes, therefore, lie beliefs about how "education" and society "ought" to work. What public education is to be held accountable for is critically dependent on educational aims, and "questions about the aims and content of education are intimately connected with views about the kind of society we wish to live in" (White, 1990, p. 16).

COMPETING PHILOSOPHIES

Manzer (1994) suggested that the present ideological divide in Canadian education can be traced to differences between two kinds of liberalism that presently compete for dominance. He referred to these liberalisms as "ethical" and "technological" liberalism, and concluded that both advocate different purposes for education, give priority to different problems, and promote different forms of state intervention and principles of state organization. In addition, he suggested, they interpret the main criteria of public policy evaluation differently and attach different levels of significance to each. Manzer's work is used to frame the discussion that follows. To avoid the inference that technological liberalism is somehow unethical, ethical liberalism is referred to as person-centered liberalism.

When conceptualizing an accountability framework, it is possible to envision two overlapping circles, one circle representing person-centered liberalism, the other technological liberalism. In the area of intersection, and common to both, lie the principles and elements that undergird accountability, regardless of political philosophy. Placed separately into each circle are the strategies that serve to make public education "more accountable" as legitimized under each political philosophy. These strategies are linked to the elements and principles of accountability.

Although in practice, educational processes and accountability reforms do not fit neatly into a duality, common themes and constructs run through many of the writings. From a theoretical perspective, therefore, it is useful to conceptualize accountability processes on the basis of their "fit" into these two philosophies. Similar dualities appear in writings that do not use the lens of liberalism (Earl & LeMahieu, 1996; Raphael, 1993) and that are not Canadian (Darling-Hammond, 1993; Kogan, 1986).

It is not within the scope of this chapter to critique Manzer's (1994) liberal typologies, or to provide a detailed account of the differences identified between person-centered and technological liberalism. Rather, this chapter applies Manzer's framework to illustrate how two elements of accountability—planning and assessment—come to be operationalized differently under each type of liberalism.

Person-Centered Versus Technological Liberalism

As outlined by Manzer (1994), person-centered liberalism envisions "a society founded on the principle of universal human development in which all persons have equal opportunities to develop fully their special abilities, and participate freely in the political, economic, social and cultural life of their community" (p. 148). Influenced by radical communitarian (democratic socialist) thought, person-centered liberalism rejects a hierarchical community in favor of an egalitarian one and promotes participatory structures in its governance and in its schools.

Person-centered liberalism accepts Kymlicka's (1989) argument that "membership in a cultural community [has] an important place in liberal thought as an individual good, and hence as a criterion for evaluating distributive justice" (Manzer, 1994, p. 164). Consequently, it promotes the survival of minority groups through a "political association of compartmentalized or segmented cultural communities within a single state" (p. 16). This is because

> regard for the educational developments of individuals requires regard, not only for the educational implications of their membership in the political community . . . but also for the educational implications of their membership in the cultural community in which they are born. (p. 165)

Technological liberalism, on the other hand, is influenced by conservative communitarian (social conservative) thought and accepts that "individuals are unequal [and should be] governed by command and obedience based on relationships of legitimate authority" (Manzer, 1994, p. 14). It advocates representative democracy, and "assumes that the coherence and integrity of the state derives from its foundation on a linguistic and cultural community . . . [and considers that] . . . a regime of cultural and linguistic assimilation is an essential element in the formation, preservation, and development of the nation-state" (p. 16). Therefore, technological liberals focus their efforts on the promotion of a uniform national culture.

Technological liberals contend that to remain economically competitive in an international economy, nations must develop an educational system that is among the best and the most competitive in the world. As expressed by Hamel (1991), "In a transnational world, failure to 'out learn' other societies renders a country dependent, then redundant and vulnerable among the community of nations" (cited by Adler, 1994, p. 13). Consequently, it is argued, government must invest heavily in a "superior education, research and development, and a competitive infrastructure" (Adler, 1994, p. 5). The "concern that the existing education systems are not adequately meeting the chal-

lenges of the complex modern world . . . [persists even though] . . . the average number of years of schooling of adult Canadians increased steadily during the past few decades" (McKenzie, 1994, p. 1). The suggestion that nations may be "left behind" if they do not accept the strategies promoted by technological liberals has proven to be enormously powerful in Western societies focused on moving progressively forward.

Different Purposes of Education

As outlined by Manzer (1994), the purpose of education for person-centered liberals is the universal development of individual students. Because the cultural community is considered pivotal for individual growth, preserving community is viewed as a primary problem of public education. From this perspective, in a multidenominational and multilingual society, providing students with equal opportunity is interpreted as providing different opportunities to help ensure *equal results*. An "accountable" educational system, therefore, is one that considers cultural diversity and strives to meet the unique needs of individual students.

For technological liberals, on the other hand, the overriding purpose of public education is to prepare all students equally for global competition. Attention, therefore, is focused on the importance of education for the collective economic well-being of the nation. As stated by the Economic Council of Canada (ECC, 1992), "Skill development is more important than ever in a global economy in which competitiveness and productivity depend increasingly on brains, not brawn. The choice for Canadians is clear, they must develop their skills or accept low wages" (p. 1). For technological liberals, "developing skills" has been increasingly linked to improving "coherence" between the needs of employers, and the ability of educational systems to meet those needs (p. 3). It is argued that "Canada must move towards a system that provides a closer integration of school, work, and training . . . [and] employers must continually identify and clearly articulate their needs" (EEC, 1992, pp. 134-135). Meeting the needs of employers is linked to an assumption that an educated workforce is a prerequisite for a prosperous economy.

Legitimate Accountability Strategies

Planning—the curriculum. Planning is considered a vital element of accountability because plans can enhance transparency and, if they are developed in consultation with stakeholders, can increase responsiveness, and therefore redress. An essential component of the educational plan is the curriculum. Debates centered on the curriculum are not focused on the idea of curriculum itself but rather on the ontological and epistemological differences inherent in person-centered and technological liberalism.

For person-centered liberals, a student-centered education is one focused on accommodating students to let them feel equally comfortable and successful in schools, regardless of their ability or their cultural background. To facilitate this, a spiral curriculum and holistic learning experiences are promoted, and teachers are encouraged to adapt learning experiences to meet the unique needs and abilities of students. Person-centered liberals assume that the most important knowledge about education is situated locally with teachers, parents, and students (Manzer, 1994, p. 264). Consequently, a decentralized educational system is promoted to give teachers and local administrators increased levels of autonomy over educational decision making, including decisions related to the curriculum. Because person-centered liberalism advocates participatory democracy and assumes an educative society, parents, students, and teachers are not considered "clients" of the educational system but rather are encouraged to become active participants in it.

In contrast, technological liberals promote a core curriculum that is developed at the provincial level. Unlike person-centered liberals, who hold public education accountable for decentralizing decisions concerning the content of the curriculum, technological liberals assume that the most important knowledge for global competition is located provincially or even federally. In addition, they assume that there is a requisite body of knowledge that all students must learn to compete equally in a global society, and that "knowledge and curriculum content can be broken down into 'micro-outcomes' that eventually lead to more significant 'exit outcomes' " (McKernan, 1993, p. 346). From the perspective of technological liberalism, therefore, it is imperative that curriculum outcomes or results be clearly defined, and education is expected to focus on student learning. Student learning refers to mastery of prescribed levels of requisite content.

The need to develop plans to increase accountability is not debated, nor is the need for a curriculum; after all, both can be used to enhance accountability. Rather, the debates over curriculum are embedded in beliefs about human nature and ideas about the public good. For person-centered liberals, curriculum should be focused on accommodating diversity to promote personal development. For technological liberals, curriculum should be focused on uniformity, and the imposition of requisite knowledge to promote the culture of the nation-state. The curriculum and learning strategies promoted, therefore, depend on political philosophy.

Assessment—student testing. Assessment is frequently related to accountability and is often associated with the principle of disclosure. As with curriculum, the need for assessment in public education is not debated. Instead, debates over assessment emanate from the legitimacy of the types of assessments promoted.

Under a philosophy of student-centered liberalism, teacher assessments of student work are considered the most valid form of student assessment because teachers, in consultation with parents and students, are considered the best judges of student progress. In addition, formative evaluation is emphasized because it is "interwoven almost seamlessly with instruction and learning" (Earl & LeMahieu, 1996) and, therefore, emphasizes personal growth. Standardized testing is rejected because of its failure to accommodate multiple realities and meet the needs of individual students.

In contrast, technological liberals reject a dependence on teacher-based testing because of their bias and their potential for poor-quality assessments. For technological liberals, the extent to which students master specified knowledge is best measured by results on standardized tests of achievement. However, standardized tests are only considered legitimate, even by technological liberals, if all students learn the same thing, reflecting the technological liberal focus on uniformity. The present trend toward national and international testing reflects this philosophy, as does the focus on results or "outcomes" that is increasing throughout Canada. Fagan (1995), for example, suggested that "education has been slow to accept what many public and private sector enterprises have long known, that significant improvement cannot take place without measuring outcomes, focusing on standards of performance, and targeting action around the measured outcomes" (p. 66). This trend in assessment is also noted in Manzer's (1994) observation that in recent official policy studies, "ultimately, accountability raises the question of whether the educational performance of students in the system meets expected standards of achievement" (p. 227).

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

As long as public education is dependent on the children and taxes of citizens, there will be demands for accountability. As Cibulka and Derlin (1995) observed, "The accountability model which underlies the various reform nostrums has had remarkable staying power" (p. 482).

Although accountability requires processes to become operationalized, accountability is first and foremost a concept. Calls to increase accountability, therefore, bring with them the need to clarify what is meant by accountability. Identifying principles and elements can add clarity and substance to the concept. What Murphy (1993) noted of restructuring is also true of accountability, that is, "people often lose touch with the core principles . . . and become preoccupied with disparate pieces of the puzzle" (p. 3).

The accountability framework that this chapter proposes is centered on principles and elements; however, it accepts that accountability processes gain their legitimacy on the basis of political philosophy and therefore relates

accountability strategies to person-centered and technological liberalism. This is necessary because an "accountable" educational system, as envisioned by technological liberals, is substantively different from that envisioned by person-centered liberals. It makes different ontological and epistemological assumptions, reflects different values, and holds different goals both for society and for schools.

Because accountability processes are legitimized on the basis of political ideology, an accountability framework can provide a possible space for discussing our hopes for education and for society. This is valuable because, as Gutmann (1988) states, "In a democracy, political disagreement is not something that we should generally seek to avoid. Political controversies over our educational problems are a particularly important source of social progress because they have the potential for educating so many citizens" (p. 184). By reflecting more specifically on the principles and elements that undergird the idea of accountability, and by understanding how accountability procedures must ultimately be validated and legitimized on the basis of political philosophy, a more honest and comprehensive view of accountability can be developed.

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14

Centralized Goal Formation, Citizenship, and Educational Pluralism

Accountability in Liberal Democratic Societies

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Many believe that educational reform will be abetted by standards that are common and rigorous. If these standards are those of Goals 2000 (1994), they may constitute a national curriculum. If not, they may generate curricular standardization at the state level. State or national standards are thought to serve two broad and interconnected purposes. One is policy articulation (see Fuhrman, 1993; O'Day & Smith, 1993). The second is accountability for both schools and students (see Bishop, 1989; Shanker, 1994; Steinberg, 1966).

Such centralization of goal formation together with extensive testing may threaten important political norms (see Arons, 1994). Goal centralization seems to require a collective vision of what is true or worthwhile. It codifies this vision in documents and processes having the force of law. Of course, any public school curriculum has the force of law, but the degree of centralization of truth and worth involved in centralized goal formation is particularly worrisome. Recall the words of J. S. Mill (1859/1956):

> All that has been said of the importance of individuality . . . and diversity . . . involves . . . diversity of education. A general state education is a mere contrivance for molding people to be exactly like one another; and as the mold in which it casts them is that which pleases the predominant power in government . . . it establishes a despotism over the mind. (p. 129)

Here I am concerned with pluralism. Modern nations are multicultural states. Their members have different origins; speak different languages; have different religions; belong to different races and ethnic groups; and have different sets of tastes, customs, and practices. Often, pluralism leads members of different cultures to desire some form of educational separatism. Minorities may want to educate their children in their own schools. (Afrocentrism and the desire for religious schools are two American examples.) Or there may be resistance to schools or to curricula that assimilate minority cultures to the dominant culture. At a minimum, people resist schools that disparage or fail to favorably respect their culture or their religion (see Baer, 1993; Banks, 1993; Fullinwider, 1996).

Is centralized goal formation inconsistent with pluralism? Centralized goal formation may aspire to achieve a central commitment of the common school movement—a common democratic and egalitarian culture created by a common educational experience (see Excellence, 1989). But it is this common culture that minority groups often wish to resist. Yet any stable society must have some shared values. Thus, the real question is, "Is centralized goal formation inconsistent with pluralism reasonably conceived?"

A shared culture may be a political good. No society that seeks a common polity can be infinitely multicultural. At the same time, in a free society, people should not be expected to share everything. If so, we need to think of multiculturalism as involving a shared center with a diverse periphery. Construction of the center requires a conception of the public goods served by education. Citizenship, equality of opportunity, and human capital formation are among these public goods.

There are various kinds of pluralism. In the United States, much of the resistance to Goals 2000 is in the name of federalism and local control. Federalism and local control protect certain forms of diversity—those easily mapped onto political jurisdictions. Different states have different histories and traditions. Even the most energetic advocates of using the schools to create a common culture will admit that it makes sense to emphasize Utah history in Utah and New York history in New York. However, most forms of pluralism are not mapped onto political jurisdictions. The different races and religions of the United States are dispersed throughout its jurisdictions.

Herein I am going to emphasize the tension between the center and the periphery by focusing on the relationships between cultural and religious pluralism and citizenship. The debate about federalism is, I believe, largely irrelevant to this tension; yet, these are the core forms of pluralism with which we must contend.

WAYS TO REASONABLY CONCEIVE PLURALISM

A society's educational system (not just its public schools) should achieve three things with respect to its diversity of religions and cultures (see Strike, 1994, 1995):

1. It must provide or allow every culture fair and adequate time and resources for the reproduction of its distinctive or distinguishing values.
2. It must provide adequate time and resources for the reproduction of the society's public values, especially citizenship.
3. It must provide adequate time and resources for members of different cultures to learn from and about one another.

Here, much depends on what is meant. Moreover, the first task may be in tension with the second and third. The trick is to strike a principled balance. In what follows, I shall describe three models of how these ideas can be understood and related. I call them liberal pluralism, democratic pluralism, and nationalist pluralism.

Liberal Pluralism

Liberal pluralism, a view most closely associated with that of John Rawls (1971, 1993), claims that each person (in association with like-minded others) has a right to a fair opportunity to pursue a self-chosen conception of the good life. Rawls expresses this view in two principles of justice. These are the following:

First Principle

> Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberties for all.

Second Principle

> Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both (a) to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged . . . and (b) attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity. (Rawls, 1971, p. 302)

The first principle protects the right of individuals to form and pursue with others a self-chosen conception of a good life. The second is intended to secure a fair share of social resources.

Rawls's position assumes a distinction between views of the good life and views of right conduct. People are entitled to their own conception of a good life; however, society should be regulated by a shared view of justice. Pursuantly, Rawls claims that people must develop two moral powers. The first is the capacity for a sense of justice (the center of a Rawlsian conception of citizenship), and the second is the capacity for a conception of the good. The role of justice is fairness in the pursuit of self-chosen lives, not the establishment of a form of political community with its own form of good life. The communities most likely to be central in people's lives are likely to be formed by shared ideas of the good and are viewed by Rawls as rooted in comprehensive doctrines that are associated with historical moral traditions. A religion would be one example.

These views suggest how Rawls might understand and balance the three functions of education noted above. Rawls might identify the development of the second moral power largely with my first function, the transmission of a culture or a moral tradition. That the development of the second moral power is associated with the transmission of a moral tradition suggests that it may have substantial education prerequisites. (Learning a tradition might be more like studying theology than developing a taste for pasta.) Moreover, Rawls' claim that justice requires governmental neutrality between diverse views of the good leads him to disavow either autonomy or deliberation as necessary factors in choosing a good life. These are valued by some traditions and not others. Neutrality requires the state to countenance people who are fully and uncritically embedded in some culture or religion and traditions that do not value the autonomy of their members. (The Amish might be an example; *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, 1972.) Thus, Rawls construes the requirements of citizenship education (my second function) narrowly (see Rawls, 1993, p. 199). Good citizens should wish to honor fair terms of cooperation with others and should know the essentials of constitutional government. But in dissociating citizenship from autonomy and deliberativeness, Rawls provides little incentive for schools to promote the third function of a multicultural education.

Democratic Pluralism

This largely instrumental picture of public life in which justice is a means to fairness in the relations between people pursuing private lives distinguishes liberal pluralism from the other two views. Democratic pluralism has found its best, most recent expression in Amy Gutmann's (1987) *Democratic Education*. According to Gutmann, the goods that constitute a good life ought to be products of reasoned and collective deliberation, not just of free choice. Gutmann sees democratic schools as places in which citizens should engage

in collective and democratic deliberation about the goods that constitute a worthwhile life and as places where the capacities and values that make democratic deliberation possible are learned.

Gutmann suggests that schools have two main goals:

1. *Democratic character*: Every school is required to promote the development of the values and capacities that make democratic deliberation possible.
2. *Goals that are democratically chosen* so long as two principles, *nonrepression* and *nondiscrimination*, are respected. (These principles preclude the exclusion of either ideas or people from democratic deliberation.)

This view makes democratic deliberation essential to conceiving a good life. It is consistent with pluralism in that it envisions people bringing to the democratic conversation views rooted in their own religion or culture, and it does not seek to eliminate pluralism in favor of a common culture. Nevertheless, where liberal pluralism emphasizes the avoidance of interference between cultures, democratic pluralism emphasizes collective deliberation. (For a discussion of this and related issues of political socialization, see Callan, 1996; Galston, 1995; Kymlicka, 1995; Strike, 1996.) This central difference implies others.

First, the shift to democratic character generates a broader notion of citizenship than does Rawls's emphasis on justice. It includes tolerance and reciprocity, but it adds the skills and values required for democratic deliberation.

Second, Gutmann's view permits a wider range of collective choice of goods. The school need not be neutral between differing conceptions of the good. The rights of minorities are protected, not by government neutrality, but by preventing the majority from excluding dissenters from the ongoing process of deliberation.

Third, there may be a higher value placed on the intrinsic worth of civic life. Participation and civic friendship may be viewed as intrinsic goods to be promoted.

Finally, the third of my three functions of education in a pluralistic society is both highly valued and connected to both the first and the second. Democratic deliberation is central to selecting a suitable conception of a good life and to developing democratic character. It follows that, for Gutmann, minority cultures are not exempt from the imperatives of democratic character and democratic deliberation should they think these inconsistent with their own traditions (see her discussion of the Old Order Amish; Gutmann, 1987, pp. 29, 44).

National Pluralism

The third view is national pluralism. National pluralism sees the civic role of the schools as the transmission of a distinct national culture and believes that this culture is connected to the maintenance of liberal democratic institutions (for discussion, see Habermas, 1996; Strike, 1991).

The idea of national pluralism is to transmit a common culture that goes beyond the requirements of teaching a narrowly formulated political culture (one emphasizing tolerance and reciprocity and rooted in such documents as the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence) but that is "big-tented" enough to accommodate significant diversity within it (Hirsch, 1987). In the U.S. context, this is likely to be a culture that is disproportionately European in its origins but that is also a distinctively American creation (Schlesinger, 1992) involving the contribution of elements of many cultures. Moreover, this common culture sustains or provides a context in which a liberal democratic political culture can thrive.

The idea of a civil religion illustrates. The American civil religion is a distillation of the views of many sects crafted to perform a civic role. It is the religion invoked in civic ceremonies and political speeches, whose God is trusted on America's money, who was once prayed to in schools, and who was only recently (and not fully) excluded from graduation ceremonies. This is a religion that, supposedly, can be shared by most Americans and whose God can be worshipped in public space. Although people are expected to continue to be associated with various denominations, these are too sectarian to be brought into public space.

Consider three arguments for such a big-tented, shared culture. First, such a culture is useful if Americans are to identify with one another and to see themselves as members of a common society with a common citizenry (see Anthony Scalia's dissent in *Lee v. Weissman*, 1992). A strong national identity may be a condition of according equal rights and fair treatment to those who are not members of one's religion or ethnic group. Second, although Americans come from all over the world, their political institutions were conceived in Europe, especially England. American democracy may require instruction in the background culture that gave rise to it (Bennett, 1984). Third, when a society has a majority culture, that culture inevitably becomes a form of capital, the possession of which is important for equal access to the higher forms of education and good jobs (Hirsch, 1987). Equality of opportunity is more likely to be achieved by sharing the common culture than by trying to make sure that the majority culture does not function to mediate access to education or jobs. (Imagine trying to give Ebonics equal status in American economic life.)

Nationalistic pluralism, like democratic pluralism, rejects liberal neutrality. It differs from democratic pluralism in seeing the shared culture as a received tradition more than as the product of democratic deliberation. Democratic politics presuppose the shared culture of a political community. Nationalistic pluralism thus sees the second educational function of pluralistic societies (promoting a shared civic culture) as more dependent on the first function than on the third. That is, liberal democratic institutions presuppose a culture in which there is already, to a degree, a shared view of the good and a community formed by it.

PLURALISM, CENTRALIZED GOAL FORMATION, AND FLEXIBLE ACCOUNTABILITY

Consider what I shall call "centralized goal formation with strong accountability" (CGSA). CGSA involves detailed descriptions of desired curriculum outcomes developed at the state or national level, together with an accountability program designed to hold schools and students accountable for teaching and learning this curriculum in considerable detail. In CGSA, the what of education (see *A New Compact for Learning*, 1994) is determined largely by the state. CGSA, thus understood, might be viewed as an ideal type that various accountability programs might exhibit in varying degrees. What is essential about CGSA is that it substantially restricts the opportunities for local schools to amend centrally defined curricula or to engage in local deliberations about their content. Moreover, the deliberations of local schools become focused on implementation of state curricula; on means, not ends. The most likely instruments of these restrictions are statewide achievement tests used to judge both students and school performance.

CGSA seems consistent with nationalist pluralism. It is less clear that it is consistent with democratic pluralism or liberal pluralism. Below, I characterize the values that create tension between CGSA and democratic and liberal pluralism. I will then try to describe some features of a flexible form of accountability that is more consistent with pluralism.

Democratic pluralism is likely to resist CGSA because it values local deliberation about the curriculum, not because it views centralized goals per se as culturally inappropriate. Democratic pluralism is likely to produce significant curricular diversity at the local level; the reason is that this is the likely result of local deliberations. Local deliberations, however, are important to democratic pluralism largely because they permit more extensive participation in goal setting. Local participation in goal-setting deliberations is likely to be valued for four reasons. The first is that participation is important

for the development of democratic character. Second, democratic pluralism values consensual goals that are chosen for reasons developed by means of a democratic deliberative process. Third, democratic pluralism may see the ownership of goals as associated with participation in forming them. Fourth, local participation is community building. Democratic pluralism is concerned not so much for the content of educational goals as with the processes employed to choose them. Although it is obvious that such processes cannot be altogether local, it is essential to the aspirations of democratic pluralism that some of them are. It should be apparent that CGSA is in tension with democratic pluralism insofar as it tends to remove the decision-making process about the curriculum from local venues.

Liberal pluralism will be most concerned about the content of the curriculum. It may resist CGSA because it sees a centralized curriculum as the product of a majority culture (perhaps an instrument of national pluralism) and thus as inattentive to, or oppressive of, minority cultures. Or, it may believe that CGSA is so expansive in its expectations that schools are effectively prevented from being attentive to the additional curricular needs of minority cultures. This last concern may be heightened if it is believed that the initiation of children into their primary cultures requires significant resources and time. Moreover, minority cultures may be more in need of such resources and time than majority or dominant cultures because their values and practices are less likely to be acquired informally (see Kymlicka, 1989; Strike, 1994).

If so, liberal pluralism will wish to permit robust pluralism in education. What exactly is required may differ greatly depending on context. It may sometimes require only healthy private institutions such as churches, or it may require the kinds of diversity in extracurricular activities in public schools such as those provided for by the Equal Access Amendments and *Westside v. Mergans* (1990). It may require a curricular approach akin to that envisioned in the ideas of shared time or released time applied to ethnic rather than religious diversity. (Perhaps, for example, a part of the curricular day might be Afrocentric in schools with significant African American populations.) Sometimes, it might require more deeply embedding the curriculum in the cultural or religious interpretive framework of a group. Charter schools or vouchers might serve to do this. Or, it might require diverse curricula in literature or in history to accommodate local variations.

FLEXIBLE ACCOUNTABILITY

These arguments suggest that we should be attentive to seeking more flexible forms of accountability as alternatives to CGSA to make space for both pluralism and localism. Here, I want to suggest three strategies that begin

an account of flexible accountability that I am afraid, in a necessarily brief chapter, can be little more than slogans. (For a development of these ideas in a different context, see Strike, 1997.) These three approaches are each intended to permit states to promote standards and tests that are narrowly tailored to serve clear public interests (in citizenship and human capital development) while also permitting schools to have appropriate forms of curricular diversification and significant local decision-making forums. Insofar as these strategies allow schools to diversify their curriculum to respond to differences in the culture and aspirations of students or to local needs, they serve liberal pluralism. Insofar as they also permit more local decision making about curriculum, they serve democratic pluralism. In considering these suggestions, it should be recalled that the interests of liberal pluralism and democratic pluralism do not fully coincide. Thus, the details of how these strategies might work out would vary depending on whether emphasis was placed on the diversification sought by liberal pluralism or the local decision-making forums desired by democratic pluralism. These strategies are described below.

Means of accountability should emphasize creating a high, but narrow bar. Think of the width of a bar as the range of knowledge and skills for which schools or students are accountable. A set of tests that measures reading and numerosity is narrower than one that covers history, science, and literature as well. States express their curricular aspirations through standards. They express their curricular will through that for which they test and hold people accountable. Tests thus coerce more than standards. (Indeed, it is tests, not booklets describing goals or frameworks, that should be viewed as the real standards.) When the state coerces, it should take care to coerce matters that are clearly in the public interest. National or state tests that hold students and schools accountable for basic literacy and numerosity meet this standard. It is far from clear that standardized tests that emphasize history or literature do. Thus, national and state tests should emphasize areas in which the public interest is clear. They may demand increased performance by setting the bar higher than it was set by minimal competence tests, but let it be a narrow bar.

States should coerce to adequacy but inspire to excellence. I have two kinds of adequacy in mind. One is that there should be some standards for overall student performance that all schools should be expected to meet. The second is that there should be some threshold of competence that should be met by all students who are able (see Gutmann, 1987, pp. 137-139). These standards should emphasize curricular areas that are central to the public interest and the welfare of all students. Arguments for such standards should show that when students fail to meet them, they are denied significant access to our society's political and economic institutions; also, when such standards

are not met by significant numbers of students, the welfare of society is broadly harmed. Literacy and numerosity are again paradigmatic. Governments are fully entitled to hold schools and students accountable for meeting such standards. Focusing on these will set a narrow, but high bar. In such areas, governments need not tolerate either failing schools or failing students in the name of pluralism.

Governments might also want to promulgate standards for broader curricular areas. It may be important that they have such standards to prevent schools from setting their sights too exclusively on those areas that are most central to the public interest, a common complaint about minimal competence tests. However, in cases where the public interest is not clear or compelling, standards should play a restricted and noncoercive role. Standards might be used to provide models of what a quality curriculum can be like. There might be diverse and even competing standards reflecting different local needs or views. States might expect local jurisdictions to create their own tests that might be reviewed for their level of rigor, but not for their correspondence to a detailed curriculum framework. Governments might seek ways to help local schools to understand what educational excellence is and to move them in its direction, but they should avoid defining what must be taught in detail. This might be a useful approach to literature.

Thick but vague standards. There are some areas of the curriculum that may be central to the public interest but where governments should, nevertheless, be reluctant to create detailed curriculum expectations. History is such an area. History may be central to citizenship. But history raises two difficulties. First, frameworks of historical interpretation are essential to history but are also matters of considerable controversy. Governments that value intellectual liberty and open debate must be especially careful to avoid deciding what is true in areas of controversy and giving particular and contested visions of the truth the color of law. Second, local variation in history may be especially important if the study of history is to be sensitive to the many forms of pluralism that characterize the United States. In cases with these characteristics, the views that we should set a high, but narrow bar or that we should inspire but not coerce are not satisfactory. Because history serves a significant public interest, its teaching warrants a level of governmental interest that goes beyond inspiration. And it is difficult to know how governments can set a high but narrow bar without defining truth in matters of controversy and without undercutting local variation. One approach to such areas may be to have standards that are thick, but vague. Such standards ought to announce to local schools a philosophical view about history that links it reasonably to its public purposes. Standards might also serve to illustrate this conception with rich examples of what might be done or what might be

taught. But standards that are detailed and specific about what must be taught or tests that create such standards operationally should be avoided.

New York State's recently promulgated *Learning Standards for Social Studies* (1966) provides a reasonable example of thick, vague standards. These standards emphasize the role of social studies and history in promoting citizenship. They focus on that which Americans should share, but in a way that emphasizes what is common to our political culture as expressed in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. They avoid the mirror evils of demanding a history that ignores the injustices of American life or that views American history solely through the category of oppression. And they note that we are a multicultural society and encourage the study of different cultures in a way that invites local variation in precisely what cultures are looked at. Thus, they seem thick, but vague. They point to a coherent direction for the curriculum but are consistent with suitable local variation in what can be done.

I doubt there can be thick, vague standardized tests. Thus, I fear that much of the work that has been put into developing standards that point to and exemplify reasonable aspirations but do not coerce or eliminate local variations will be undone if there is to be a new Regents test in American history, especially if all New York students must pass it to graduate. I wonder, for example, how many schools in which African American students predominate will be willing to add an emphasis on African American history to their curriculum beyond what is tested for on the Regent's exam if such an addition to the curriculum competes for instructional time with content that will be on the test. Here, a test may require schools or teachers to choose between a curricular interest suitable for their students and having their students pass what may become a high-stakes exam.

Pluralism can coexist with standards, and it can coexist with accountability. But let us have a high but narrow bar, standards that inspire but do not coerce beyond the public interest, and standards that are thick but vague in those areas that are central to a robust pluralism.

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15

The Politics of Accountability

Research in Prospect

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The two main reasons for directing attention to the educative or noneducative quality of the politics of accountability have been extensively demonstrated in these two issues. The policy contexts described are almost uniformly reported to be in conceptual confusion, displaying incoherent mixes of reform strategies and inappropriate administrative tools, and often exhibiting gross insensitivity to plural political cultures. The policy problem of accountability needs to be better connected to learning, teaching, leading, and governing. This chapter, therefore, discusses practical implications of interest to policy communities in schools and theoretical implications for those who wish to reflect on explanatory systems and recommends further research.

Although generalisation is inevitably constrained by the methodological limits of each study reported, many implications can be drawn from the preceding research reports. The reports from North American settings are primarily concerned with politically critical challenges: productivity, governability, and equity, as well as with maintaining policy fidelity and cultural authenticity. As with the international studies, which dwell more on consumerism, communitarianism, bureaucracy, local democracy, and managerialism, these politically complex challenges are about determining the terms on which accountability may and should be conceived, negotiated, and discharged. The two penultimate chapters above make it clear that many recurrent problems are (a) the propensity of the politics of accountability to being captured by exclusivist ideologies; (b) the role of the politics of accountability in the arbitration of educational purposes, structures, and cultures; and (c) the role of the politics of accountability in reconciling centralism and pluralism in a liberal democratic society.

We will organise the discussion around these three issues and will discuss each contribution to the collection under one of these headings. We must add a caveat that many of the chapters raise issues that cut across more than one category. Space limitations also dictated some simplification. After discussing the above three issues, the chapter turns to broader philosophical issues associated with the politics of accountability.

POWER POLITICS OF ACCOUNTABILITY

The Realpolitik of accountability can be brutal and antieducative in effect. When David H. Monk, Emil J. Haller and Janie L. Nusser provided their analysis of district productivity politics, they revealed the six-step approach too often used to control and abuse community accountability politics. Step 1, create and sustain a perception of the community as unique to legitimate exceptional policies. Step 2, weld the community together into a manipulable power base by emphasising hostile conditions and external enemies. Such scapegoating exports blame for failures, retains credit for successes, maintains a fatalistic acceptance of unexpected outcomes, and ensures that the distribution of power and the quality of leadership remain unexamined. Step 3, control the information flows from comparable jurisdictions to prevent alternative interpretations of the situation. Step 4, use locally potent metaphors to manufacture and control the emergence of issues and the definition of problem-solution sets. Step 5, soak up any impulse to participate in politics with a thick and warm blanket of public consultation. And, Step 6, at all times ensure that the public relations and rhetorical devices used, such as myth-making and storytelling, cohere with and co-opt communal and institutional cultural histories.

A parallel set of district political tactics was used to ingratiate the containment of costs: "Rationalise" to maximise the efficiency of plans, run "budget reviews" to shave expenditure, mount "showcase" exceptions while driving down the scope of the curriculum, celebrate the economic "ingenuity of teachers" while trimming their salaries, "struggle for entitlements" while taking full advantage of state aid, and pare overall commitments by "sharing services." Although this combination of tactics did help to sustain public support for uncommonly high tax rates in some areas, Monk et al. warned that fiscal stress is still working to undermine this uneasy peace. Governance and accountability politics therefore need to do more than merely defend such peace. They need to constantly advance the priority given to public education.

The importance of more educative forms of governance and accountability was also highlighted by Kenneth K. Wong and Dorothea Anagnostopoulos. They showed that outcome-accountability policies in Chicago, intended to remedy the performance of schools on probation, neither recognised nor

respected the political power of teachers. In this case, "high politics" were brought low by classroom-level bureaucrats.

In essence, the mayor and his policy elite declared war on low performance in public schools and mobilised an army of program officials to intervene and implement his policies. They outflanked current accountability structures, marginalised legitimate stakeholders, started a firefight with teachers using mass standardised tests, and appointed managers to schools on probation to cut professional discretion. The imposition of prescriptions (regarding school improvement strategies, resource management, and teaching) created ideal conditions for a politics of resistance to flower. This later required a negotiated armistice and a politics of accommodation and reconciliation that contained further implementation. Although teachers found ways to accommodate the new curricular, resource, and testing policies, they pruned the objectives of the intervention, co-opted the goals, and then reestablished control over the curriculum and teaching by adhering to their prior routines. In sum, and perhaps slightly overstated, the "mayoral nuking" of these teachers, using outcome-accountability policies and a culturally offensive politics of interventionism, left their practices much irradiated, potentially even more "shell-backed," but substantively and genetically unchanged.

CULTURAL POLITICS OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Cultural factors in the politics of accountability were found to be important in the arbitration of state goals and local preferences. Cultures were also noted to be extremely resistant to alternative criteria and processes of accountability from outside. It appears that they are intrinsically conservative, some more so than others, with understandable reason when closely examined. Furthermore, as Rick Ginsberg and Barnett Berry showed, low-achieving school districts tend to reject attempts to change their cultures that use coercive power or rational logic. It is a matter of fighting to retain what is understood and preloved as a trustworthy system of beliefs. Such conservative cultures allocate little value to, and typically lack, a critical mass of culture-changing capacities. Ironically, the very forms of district accountability so often introduced, such as payments by results and takeover threats, tended to have the unintended effect of actively discouraging the development of such transformative capacities.

In addition to these limits to a coercive politics of accountability, the chances of getting better results by using empirical and rational means remain unproven. With exceptions, the continuing use of standardized test scores to indicate school quality offended the values of the teachers' culture of professionalism. Also, their largely constructivist epistemology tended to regard such logical empiricism as simplistic because it trivialises the complexities

of student learning and the subtleties of the profession. At worst, it was found to regard such an approach as intendedly reproductive and inequitable because it decontextualises teaching and learning, ignores unequal learning opportunities, and sets aside long-standing disparities in the social context that affect outcomes.

Ginsberg and Berry's research also highlighted another earthy problem. Most politics of accountability in poorly performing schools displayed a persistent incapacity to gain purchase on the norms that guarantee resistance to cultural change. They pointed out that even the most educative politics of accountability in public education are unlikely to gain much ground in settings that are dominated by a vicious politics of race, poverty, and traditionalistic political cultures. Accountability norms in education are not likely to change, they argued, until host communities are ready and able to take a greater sense of responsibility. It is only when disabled adults can recognise and respond through an educative politics of accountability, they concluded, that changed assumptions and actions can help transform the educational system and the dysfunctional aspects of its host culture.

How cultural change might be better managed became clearer when Arnold Danzig, R. Brian Cobb, Timothy Gray Davies, Corinne Mantle-Bromley, and Ann B. Miser reported on the politics of accountability of a federal-state program. Accounting for Colorado's $24 million School-to-Career program was found to have deeply affected its implementation, representation, and evaluation. Although historical, political, and legislative imperatives all played their parts, the way that a state management team, a state evaluator, and a university evaluation team shared responsibility for the local partnerships and regional centres revealed the sheer potency of accountability politics.

The first and relatively unremarkable finding was that School-to-Career program priorities must compete with other reforms, such as standards-based education. The interests and commitments of school personnel, administrators, and teachers had been diffused by multiple demands. What was remarkable for these educators was the plurality of what they saw as "political accountability" demands from local and state constituencies and state agencies. Acknowledging as legitimate and working with such pluralism was a fresh experience.

The politics reported were usually about building workable levels of consensus among relative strangers with inevitable delays between service design and delivery. So intent were constituents to achieve their own complex agendas that their representatives tended to be concerned about implementation strategies and evaluation requirements only after the deals had been done. Business people were, reportedly, often very frustrated by the time taken to build the consensus required and tended to interpret it as an antibusiness

ethos, rather than realising that it was due to their own limited understanding of school cultures. State officials took a more prosaic line; they preferred partnerships that met federal guidelines and embodied local support. What is even more remarkable than the legitimation of pluralism is that very few participants apparently realised the importance of the role played by the common ground or touchstone in creating an authentic politics of accountability.

James G. Cibulka and Roberta L. Derlin described the growth of such shared understandings when reporting how a policy acquires adequacy. They showed that a policy can be regarded as adoptable, as sustainable, and as effective, but that it achieves these three states differently in institutional, political, and societal settings. For an accountability policy to move from being seen as adoptable and sustainable to being regarded as effective, it must satisfy the expectations of policymakers, administrators, teachers, parents, and students. Because the expectations that are used to judge credibility or authenticity can be quite plural, they hypothesised that a responsible politics of accountability would lead to an assembly of mutually acceptable criteria and processes regarding performance in all three settings, that is, touchstone. They suggested that criteria and processes would need to be accurate, fair, reliable, and trustworthy.

What they found in Colorado and Maryland over 3 years was that accountability policies and practices that "worked" were the standards and processes that assured stakeholders that organisational goals were being achieved. The state education agency in Maryland wanted to move the intended outcomes from compliance with rules and prudent management of inputs to taking greater responsibility for maximising student outcomes. This institutional perspective, however, did not always coincide with local priority-setting processes.

The outcomes were instructive. Districts and schools with significant culture-changing capacities, that is, with human and social capital, had moved from passive resistance through to seeing the new policies as adoptable, sustainable, and reasonably effective. The passive resistance in poorly performing schools, like those researched by Ginsberg and Berry, had sometimes deepened to the stage where the policy proposals were regarded as implausible, temporary, and failing. The incidence of poverty faced by a school sometimes influences the perceptions of teachers about whether the state policy can be implemented effectively.

The approach taken in each state was different. Colorado's approach placed more emphasis on local preferences in framing accountability policies. Although this may mitigate some of the complexities of incorporating local support for state initiatives, it may raise a corresponding problem—How to ensure that local efforts support the state goal of achieving high student performance through standards.

A crucial determinant, then, of the variance in the reaction of poorly performing schools to state policies rests with each state's ability to (a) encourage capacity building; (b) create authentic accountability policies; (c) achieve high levels of coherence between them; and (d) demonstrate credible benefits in institutional, political, and societal terms. In sum, this means that each state needs to be able to manage the progressive development of new structure.

STRUCTURAL POLITICS OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Hanne B. Mawhinney noted that one of the main drivers of systemic reform agendas was a belief that accountability policies had lost their political and societal credibility. One practical outcome was the growth of policy research that broadened the use of assessment strategies. By considering the patterns of policy activity in different institutions and across provincial settings in Canada, she was also able to show that the sociopolitical function and philosophy of assessment had become primarily one of social control. As in the cases of Colorado and Maryland, where the politics of accountability were found to be focusing on the responsibility for maximising student outcomes, the assessment data that were valued most were measures of student learning.

However, echoing Ginsberg and Berry's findings, Mawhinney challenged the assumption that centralised, ministry-controlled, and external assessment strategies possessed the power to enforce a centrally defined set of goals. Her analysis of distinctions among provincial institutional contexts suggests that a more subtle framework is needed for distinguishing between the degree of control over assessment practices (strong or weak) and the source of control (central or local).

The implications of Mawhinney's research help reinforce a number of points made above. Past studies of accountability may well have conflated strong control over assessment with centralisation. The patterns of educational control could be determined more by the form of assessment control used and the location of power over assessment procedures than by the apparent degree of overall administrative centralisation. And whatever the formal distribution of power and the politics of accountability that help determine accountability criteria and processes, she found that assessment practices are significantly mediated by teachers in Canadian schools.

The degree to which the nature and location of power in education systems can affect the politics of accountability is particularly stark in England and Wales. This structural question of centralisation versus decentralisation adds another layer of complexity to the cultural issues discussed in the section above. Janet Ouston, Brian Fidler, and Peter Earley show how quasi-markets were created to force schools to become more responsive and customer

focused. New regulatory bodies set standards of performance and audit schools. Performance indicators were defined and comparisons published. The reforms were to improve schools. The outcomes were apparently otherwise.

The first impression was that governance power had been transferred from local education authorities (LEAs) to parents. The evidence suggests instead that a hierarchy of schools was reinforced with some schools being able to select parents rather than parents selecting schools. The control of the curriculum moved from local authorities and schools to central government. Parents exercise very little curriculum choice.

Ouston et al. also show that the new school inspection system has had mixed reviews. Many report that the inspection report is reasonably valid but doubt any significant contribution to developmental processes. Schools' capacities to respond to the reports and their intakes both vary considerably. Wider mechanisms and policies have also been introduced with both intended and unintended outcomes. And although there have been demands for accountability, and for a stricter policing of compliance, the government has relied on normative change induced by the market. The market, sustained by site-based management and open enrollment policies, has had a major impact on educational aims, practices, and values.

Hilary A. Radnor, Stephen J. Ball, and Carol Vincent confirm similar effects in the links between local educational government, accountability, and democracy. One practical outcome is that the meanings of these words have become confused and incoherent. The binary divide between providers and clients fails to fit or excludes some participants. Some stakeholders and agencies lack any accountability, transparency is patchy, some processes are arbitrary, and some headteachers have become far too powerful.

The most evident outcome is that three general models of accountability are emerging in the LEAs. Model 1 gives high priority to community needs and local political goals. Model 2 emphasises the maintenance of service provision and support for schools. Model 3 sets greatest store on cost reduction, performance, and monitoring. The structures implied by these three models reflect major confusions over the meaning and intent of the legislation and theories of good schooling. Radnor et al. also noted that there is considerable potential in the current stage of cultural change in education for a politics of accountability at a local level to achieve more reciprocal relationships and communitarian forms of accountability.

The politics of accountability also owes part of its form to the way that government ministers and officials manage matters within constitutional structures. Peter Cuttance, Grant Harman, Reynold J. S. Macpherson, Alan Pritchard, and Don Smart examined the rather lively consequences of resisting potential federal financial and performance accountability and surveillance measures in Australia. Only in higher education, where federal influence is

strong and the states are weak, have accountability processes actually been implemented. The federal minister and the market both wield big sticks in Australian higher education.

Other factors shown to have significant effects in Australia are the powerful role of teachers' unions, changes of government, and how senior policymakers fear accountability processes and outcomes that might generate unwanted scrutiny, loss of control, or political embarrassment. Although they tend to champion self-managing schools, one of their deep concerns is having to share power and enter into reciprocal accountability arrangements with local constituencies.

Such a variant of local democratic structure is being trialed in New Zealand. Accountabilities have been moved to an elected board of trustees, which are then mandated to govern each school. Helen S. Timperley and Viviane M. J. Robinson report that the micropolitics of local democracy in New Zealand have actually boosted professional development rather than professional accountability to the local community or government agencies. Despite some resistance, the government is pushing schools to shift from the predominantly professional form of accountability to much more democratic forms. The new policy simply fails to acknowledge the tension between these two forms of accountability.

The relatively soft professional accountability reportedly common in New Zealand schools is reinforced daily by micropolitics. Hence, to achieve a more educative blend of democratic and professional values in school performance management, Timperley and Robinson designed a five-step policy and staff development process. First, the values in current appraisal practices were identified. Second, the touchstone between professional, community, and state policy values was identified. Third, appraisal practices consistent with the touchstone were negotiated. Fourth, training gave people the new skills they needed. Fifth and finally, trials tested the new practices and helped embed new norms in the school culture. The practical and theoretical import of this process is that it addresses and helps people reorder the fundamental relationship between their values, culture, micropolitics, and accountability.

PHILOSOPHICAL ISSUES

When Charles F. Webber and David Townsend had Canadian and Australian counterparts reflect on their experiences of radical changes to quality assurance policies and practices, it became apparent that few had experienced a process as sophisticated as that designed by Timperley and Robinson. Instead, they had been subjected to rather bruising processes, processes that had not provided any means of examining or changing the norms in their culture and practices. One result was that these educators used political analysis to

explain the situation, rather than cultural and philosophical analysis to identify norms, to weigh the values being served and identify those that should be served.

The politics of accountability were discussed in terms of the doubted motives of politicians and the need for educators to accept responsibility for the quality of teaching, the profession, and for the level of public confidence. This discourse of blame left little space for an analysis of cultural change capacities. A positive realisation was that professional accountability is a corollary of professional responsibility and a guarantor of the moral health of political and administrative systems. One immediate implication is that professional accountability needs to be defined and guarded with philosophical rigour.

The propensity of accountability systems to be hijacked by political ideologies was examined by Renée Kuchapski. She linked the nature of accountability criteria and processes to visions of the public good, and then on to the principles and elements that support the concept of accountability itself. An important implication of her work is that less ideological and more comprehensive views of accountability need to be regarded as practical and valuable norms. This would enable the process used by Timperley and Robinson to proceed more easily, where touchstone is used to build new policy and practices. Such participative and critical dialogue would help reconstruct the central metaphors and norms of professionalism.

This micro position coheres well with Kenneth A. Strike's more macro proposals on how to reconcile centralised goal formation with reasonable forms of pluralism in liberal democratic politics. He considered various arguments about the character and appropriate scope of pluralism in education and then used the results of this analysis to consider the suitability of centralised curricula and accountability measures for the schools of liberal democratic societies.

Strike concluded, reasonably, that because liberal pluralism and democratic pluralism do not fully coincide, three strategies should be modified in the light of the degree of diversification sought by liberal pluralists or the local decision-making forums desired by democratic pluralists. The three strategies he proposed are that (a) the means of accountability should emphasise creating a high but narrow bar, (b) states should coerce to adequacy but inspire to excellence, and (c) they should use thick but vague standards.

This position illustrates the extent to which the politics of accountability help determine how educative forms of governance are. It is more normally assumed that the quality of governance defines the terms on which the politics of accountability are able to be conducted. A theoretical explanation is that governance structures and the politics of accountability are dualistic in two senses. They are each both process and outcome, and interdependent.

This possible relationship was signaled first by Monk et al., who indicated that the two sets of tactics encountered concerned with cynical power base manipulation and cost containment were based almost solely on the metavalue of success; success almost solely defined in Machiavellian and economically rational terms. There was no appeal or concession made to educational or community-building values or to organisational learning. One consequence of such a narrow definition of accountability is that the public is learning not to govern public education and how not to develop its institutions. It is also learning not to value the purposes of public education other than as a fiscal liability. Hence, when the fiscal stress can no longer be managed by such tactics, the politics of accountability are likely to become radical, adversarial, simplistic, and traumatic, rather than incremental, cooperative, comprehensive, and considered, until such time as new societal values are agreed. In sum, the politics of accountability and organisational structures exist as both processes and outcomes, and they heavily influence each other.

Kenneth K. Wong and Dorothea Anagnostopoulos' report reinforces this theoretical possibility. In their case, the politics of "governance integration" masked thinly a gross appropriation of community power, power that had hitherto been more widely shared as a consequence of many decades of policy settlements. Although this aggregation of power was rhetorically legitimated, this time using a different yet equally simplistic political metaphor, it was accomplished in a very similar way and the outcome was almost identical. The new accountability policy myth of "performance" (instead of "success" as in the first case) co-opted aspects of old policy myths, reinterpreted them to manufacture illusions of reform, and then stayed on in structures and attempted to control significance. At every communication step removed from the mayoral war party, however, the rhetoric lost another point in terms of its educational value, and doubts rose about the wisdom of governance services.

Two implications follow. First, the politics of accountability in education should not automatically be conceived in pejorative terms, because the outcomes in both cases could have been very different and positive. It depended on the values and will of people in positions of power. Second, and once again, the politics of accountability helped determine, as well as were determined by, the quality of governance. This leads to the theoretical implications of an iniquitous politics of accountability.

The cultures of low-achieving school districts were shown by Ginsberg and Berry to be resistant to the use of coercive power, lacking culture-changing capacities and, sadly, being encouraged by the empirical and rational forms of accountability not to develop self-transformative capacities. This raises the real possibility that the politics of accountability in these school districts are part of the problem of low achievement, and, therefore, that their reconstruction will have to be part of any solution.

Another theoretical possibility raised by this research is that the current politics of accountability, and the governance systems with which they interact, are using singularly inadequate theories of learning and teaching. They are also apparently disconnecting the articulation and discharging of obligations in education from pre- and coexisting inequities in opportunity faced by students and their families, and the wider effects of endemic racism, poverty, and the political oppression of minorities.

An intriguing and more encouraging possibility is that if the cycle of inadequate theory and decontextualisation of accountability can be sustained by limited and closed governance services, the converse case might yet apply. If educative accountability were coupled with transformative cultural leadership and set in a context of more democratic governance, the same cycle could, presumably, act to alter "achievement" and help host communities develop their collective sense of responsibility with regard to learning dysfunctions.

This takes the discussion back to the key issue Strike raised: how to reconcile centralism with pluralism in a liberal democratic context. These concerns, he argues, connect with educational reform in at least three ways. First, those reformers who have promoted standards-driven reform have emphasised instructional efficiency in their arguments, but some have also seen centralised curricula as a means to create a shared national culture or to restrain excessive pluralism. Conversely, those who resist the development of a national culture argue that centralised curricula are inconsistent with the required level of governmental neutrality. Second, among the reforms currently favoured are voucher proposals and charter schools. Here, too, the standard argument for such reforms emphasises their capacity to create competition and, thereby, educational efficiency. However, there is also a second argument that sees them as instruments of educational pluralism. An emphasis on centralised curricular frameworks can be consistent with the first argument, but it restrains goal diversification and is inconsistent with the second.

Third, the concern for pluralism and diversity in schooling is especially important when considering accountability. If curriculum frameworks are multiple and merely function as models of excellence, there would be little reason for concern. If, however, government agencies promulgate a single set of standards for a given subject; create tests or other accountability measures that reflect these standards in detail; and then allocate resources, benefits, or sanctions in terms of student performance on such tests, the potentially coercive effects are considerable.

If curricular pluralism is to be taken seriously, Strike concludes, it is important that statewide accountability criteria and processes reflect the public interest while avoiding asserting the values of one subculture against those of another. The key issue is to have a focused and generally agreed view of the public interest.

EDUCATIVE POLITICS OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Four themes stand out in this collection. One theme is the need to recognise, to accept, and to respond proactively to the central role of politics in the administration and management of educational units, institutions, and systems. The evidence offered suggests that administrative and professional responses to the politics of accountability too often tend to be dysfunctional and less than democratic. Responses have sometimes included denial, selective inattention, aggression, even examples of arrogant disregard of legitimate interests and deceptive manipulation, rather than comprising attempts to build and sustain respectful, responsible, and educative forms of engagement.

Another theme is that the politics of accountability tend to be worked out in a context of pluralism, differentiated powers, and contested structures. In such contexts, such political activity acts as a major means of developing the organisational purposes that will really count. For example, one outcome of the politics of timetabling or scheduling is that a school publishes the nature and distribution of values intended by professional practices. The impact of the organisational artefact takes attention from the powerfully formative effects of the politics used in its construction. Similarly, the political selection of accountability processes and criteria determines the extent to which feedback helps reconstruct norms and beliefs, and the practices of educators, managers, and governors. The politics of accountability must, therefore, be regarded as a potent process of organisational learning.

The third theme is that the politics of accountability in schools and systems create a moral economy of networked obligations. Educative obligations were regularly seen as by-products of the politics of legitimation, information, structure, access, and equity. On the other hand, such obligations were sometimes distorted by the presence of competing noneducative values in the politics of productivity, choice, and excellence. The fourth theme, therefore, is the ubiquity of the politics of accountability in educational policy making. The power-packed exercise of negotiating and discharging obligations was found to be a group, institutional, systemic, and international phenomenon. The politics of accountability have become intrinsic to professional service in classrooms, staffrooms, school communities, districts, regions, states, and nations. They will need to be part of preparatory programmes.

The outcomes of such a shift toward a greater focus on accountability are not altogether clear. Few would argue that we should turn back to a period when accountability processes were weaker than they are today, mainly because such weaknesses helped create some of today's problems. What we can say is that stronger accountabilities are symptomatic of a higher coherence between purposes, structures, legitimation, and culture in educational institutions and systems. We conclude, therefore, that much more research is required to understand and improve the contribution that is being made to

educational policy making by the politics of accountability. More integrative research that straddles both sites and national boundaries, for example, is clearly needed. Many important research questions remain unanswered. Are our analytic frameworks as adequate as they might be? Have we developed appropriate databases to measure progress? Have we developed the appropriate technology to assist school communities to move from inputs-based to outcomes-based regimes? Is our leadership trained to lead institutions and systems toward more educative forms of accountability?

We have also come to believe that if accountability policies are to succeed, they must be explicitly educative in nature, that is, they must be open to change as we learn from our experience of the practical consequences of implementing them. Policy-making systems, such as the politics of accountability, really should be managed better to act according to the principles of a learning organisation that uses evaluation data to improve performance. This is a major challenge for policy systems, given the cultural and political diversity within them. However, it is unlikely that educative accountability purposes will be achieved unless policy actors bring or improve their capacity for critical self-reflection, and their openness to change, as they seek to improve the educational enterprise.

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Reynold J. S. Macpherson
Editor

This book reports on the outcomes of an international policy research project concerned with how power is being used in education to construct and discharge obligations among stakeholders. It suggests how such processes might better serve educational ends. The research examines how the politics of education at site and systemic levels has been contributing to the reconstruction of accountability policies in an international policy context, a context characterized by conceptual disarray, multiple reform strategies, blunt administrative instruments, and plural political cultures.

The contributors report on research conducted in North American settings, England and Wales, and Australia. A comparative study of two Australian and Canadian systems and two philosophical studies that examine international dilemmas round out the discussion. The book shows how the policy problem of accountability affects learning, teaching, leading, and governing. It demonstrates the ways in which the politics of accountability plays out its role in classrooms, school communities, districts, regions, states, and nations. Group, institutional, systemic, and comparative perspectives need to be considered, if educative outcomes are the expected end of accountability.

This book offers an important resource for principals, administrators at the site or district level, policy communities in schools, educational networks and systems, and those engaged in policy studies and research. It is the yearbook of the Politics of Education Association.

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